"The Open Wound": Bodies and Space in Pinter and Kane

CHAN, Woon Ki

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Thesis/ Assessment Committee

Professor ZHANG Benzi (Chair)
Professor HUDDART David (Thesis Supervisor)
Professor LAMB Julian (Committee Member)
Professor INGHAM Michael Anthony (External Examiner)

Abstract of thesis entitled:

In this thesis, I argue that Sarah Kane and Harold Pinter, whose works have always been criticized as unreal and even bizarre, actually exist within a theatrical tradition. I have pointed out the ambiguity of Naturalism and Realism, and discussed the importance of innovation within the canon: in response to social changes and our understanding of what constitutes reality, the rules governing representation should also change. The ways Kane and Pinter depart from the traditional version of Realism can best be illustrated by the use of bodies and space. Both bodies and space convey certain political themes, like intrusion and power struggle, and demonstrate the realistic dimension of the plays. More importantly, the two ideas are highly relevant to the notion of pain. "The open wound", a term used by Pinter to describe the power of Shakespeare's works, is used to describe the essence of literature. Literature is about pain. It is about the courage of facing and expressing the possible worst. It is also about the letting down of defenses, rules and restrictions, and be open to challenges and inspirations. Both Kane and Pinter reveal to us the bravery of embracing the terror, the unknown and the unfamiliar. The cruelty in Kane's works, for instance, makes manifest the dark side of reality; and forces the audience to confront the illegitimate. In the form of bodily suffering, Kane and her characters experience the pain of a religious loss, nihilism, modernity and even death. Pinter, one the other hand, manipulates devices of dramatic presence and challenges readers with their strangeness. The pauses, silences and gaps in his narratives disturb the conventional coherence of a narrative order and create a dilatory space that delays the forward movement of events. The space discomforts us with the unspoken tension; yet it also surprises us with the prolonged pleasure and aesthetics it creates. Through an exploration of bodies and space, readers and the audience are demanded to face and reconsider many of their thoughts and motives. Not only do bodies and space clarify the power of literature, they also remind us the substance of performances, which are about the recovery of senses and being open to experiences.

Keywords: pain, bodies, space, Realism, Naturalism, politics

論文摘要:

本文指出自然主義和現實主義的矛盾, 並提出走出傳統的重要性: 隨著社會和現實的變遷, 作品的寫實手法亦必須隨之而改變。品特和肯恩的作品常被批評爲不真實和荒唐, 但我認爲他們是傳統和創新的結晶。品特和肯恩善用身體和空間表達現實的概念，他們的作品有不少以身體和空間表現政治觀念的例子, 如政治鬥爭，外界入侵等都是他們作品的重要主題。另外, 身體和空間亦跟痛苦這概念相關。品特曾以「裂開的傷口」形容莎士比亞的劇作和文學的精髓：文學是重視開放的藝術，它鼓勵讀者放下防守，規條和限制，思考不同的可能性, 品特和肯恩的作品都表現出擁抱黑暗,未知和不熟悉的事物的勇氣。在肯恩的作品中, 她以肉身承受的苦難表達對宗教懷疑, 生命的虛無, 現代化和死亡的痛苦。另一方面, 品特的劇作以怪異見稱: 文本中經常出現停頓, 寂靜和敘述的空隙, 這些技巧創造了一個獨特的空間。這個空間打破了傳統敘事的連貫和一致性, 營造出拖延的效果。它亦突顯了作品的張力, 並加強了劇作的美感。身體和空間不但令讀者和觀眾重新考慮他們的思想和動機, 亦提醒我們表演藝術的精神在於開放感觀, 擁抱不同的經驗。

重要字眼: 痛苦，身體，空間，自然主義，現實主義，政治

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Introduction

The Open Wound- A Pathology of Playwriting

The idea of pain, as implied by the image of an open wound, indicates a multiple layers of meanings- one of which being the personal pain of Pinter and Kane. Before we move onto talking about the pain of reality and its relation to the concept of bodied space, a short pathology of playwriting may be useful. We will start with Kane's psychosis and Pinter's "nausea" (Pinter, 18).

Writers who commit suicide frequently have a powerful hold over our imagination, quickly gaining a kind of mythological quality or even greatness: Sarah Kane is definitely not an exception. Struggling with severe depression for many years, Kane committed suicide by hanging herself in a bathroom, bringing her life to a premature end at the age of 28. Two days before her death, she was still looking closely into *4.48* with her agent, Mel Kenyon, and discussing the roles: "It was on a Tuesday. She left a package, and the play- revised- was in the package. I was asked to go and see her in hospital, and I did, and we laughed about everything; and she was very calm and very serene. Two days later she was dead. I then received *4.48* and couldn't read it for a while" (Saunders, 153). She has left readers with six extraordinary pieces including *Blasted*, *Phaedra's Love*, *Cleansed, Crave*, *4.48 Psychosis*, and *Skin*, a short screenplay.

Quitting the MA Playwriting course at the University of Birmingham, Kane was never an ordinary writer: "I do not remember why I did it, but I decided to apply for an MA in playwrighting in Birmingham. I got funding, and that was the only reason I went really, because I needed the money. I didn't actually finish the course... The course itself was very academic. I did not think that was very useful. I did not go to most of the lectures because I felt they were inhabiting my writing" (Saunders, 39). Quitting school may sound impetuous, but her undiluted anger and her unyielding nature are assets to her writings. Her works demonstrate extreme emotions; many also display cruel physical violence. Though critics criticize Kane's emotions as almost excessive, one cannot deny how the plays' density and extremity accommodate much potential for exploration. Acting in the last performances of

Cleansed, Kane commented on the acting style- Daniel Evans recalls, "She actually made an interesting comment about the acting style she wanted in *Cleansed* by saying you shouldn't act- the key was not to play the characters in the sense of them being characters you'd meet in the street" (Qtd. in Saunders, 177). Cutting of the tongue and breaking of a limb may sound unreal and difficult to mime, she demanded her actors to open their senses and feel. In 2006, the Cattle Depot Theatre in Hong Kong presented an improvisational dance piece based on *4.48 Psychosis*, the musician Wilson Tsang comments:

> "There is a heavy sense of bitterness in *4.48*, so misty and thick and hard to resist... Through her words, I can picture the opposite worlds turning against each other... and from there it often transforms into certain silent wrath and abstract violence which, to me, is even more vigorous... than the physical and bloody kind... it is the kind of intense expression that grows not merely from hatred or insanity, but from the extreme sensitivity and endless longing in life, a truly delicate but fragile heart that is looking for any possible exit and, in so doing, breaking the barrier of all forms of fear and pain" (Tsang).

Tsang has pointed out two important characteristics of Kane's works- their intensity and power. A density of emotions can sometimes play an even greater effect than physical violence and wrath. It touches not your flesh, but soul. Evans comments on another production of *4.48* when the play ends with the cast opening of the shutters of the theatre building, recording the moment when the speaker dies: "I remember... when we first opened the shutters. It was so moving, and then opening the window and hearing the noise- it was so very moving and poignant" (Qtd. in Saunders, 175).

This sensitivity is perhaps part of what links Kane and Harold Pinter together. Belonging to a different generation, the recently diseased British playwright was an equally great observer of life. What marks Pinter a first rate writer is his ability to disclose the greatest battle in the most harmless and trivial. Many of Pinter's works appear mundane. Exchanges are harmless looking; issues discussed could be anything from a bus route to a kind of footwear; the plot can be as simple as two people conducting an interview; stage spectacle and behavior can be extremely natural- yet, the mundane is always granted talismanic significance. This sensitivity may be due to Pinter's "nausea":

> "I have [a] strong feeling about words which amounts to nothing less than nausea. Such a weight of words confronts us day in, day out, words spoken in a context such as [words in a speech], words written by me and by others, the

> bulk of it a stale dead terminology; ideas endlessly repeated and permutated, become platitudinous, trite, meaningless. Given this nausea, it's very easy to be overcome by it and step back into paralysis. I imagine most writers know something of this kind of paralysis. But if it is possible to confront this nausea, to follow it to its hilt, to move through it and out of it, then it is possible to say that something has occurred, that something has even been achieved" (Pinter, 18).

Pinter has an accurate ear for words and dialogues. To him, language is ambiguous. When our average everyday conversations become repetitious and inconsequential, they become untrustworthy; words become commonplace expressions with meanings fixed and reduced. With speakers' unwillingness to expose themselves, the communicativeness of language is also minimal: "A language… where under what is said, another thing is being said" (Pinter, 19). Pinter attempts to dig deep into language and unmasks its obstructive and elusive façade. His works are most famous for their pauses and silences, both constant stratagems of continual evasion and dishonest communication: "There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed. This speech is speaking of a language locked beneath it. That is its continual reference. The speech we hear is an indication of that which we don't hear. It is a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smoke screen which keeps the other in its place. When true silence falls we are still left with echo but are nearer nakedness" (Pinter, 19). His sensitivity brings him close to truths, not only through language games, but also a close scrutiny of characters, plot etc. He may appear like a minimalist, yet a careful one, examining all details for clues.

Neither of the two extremes, Kane's "excessive" emotions and Pinter's subtlety, however, received positive comments from critics. As Kim Solga details in his work, Kane's debut *Blasted* was more severely attacked than any post war dramatist (Reinelt, 309). Critics were very skeptical towards the cruelty and violence displayed. It was described as a "disgusting feast of filth" (Saunders, 37). Interestingly, one of the very few positive records that Kane garnered from the other dramatists was from Pinter. He praised Kane while the latter received violent protests from newspapers: "She was facing something actual and true and ugly and painful" (Lathan). A well established writer by then, Pinter's *The Birthday Party* was also disastrously unsuccessful when it was first staged. Many critics found it hysterical and elusive. It also ran for only a week. The audience failed to get the play's

meanings, and Pinter once received an interesting letter requesting him to explain who Goldberg and McCann are; where Stanley is from and whether the characters are normal (Esslin, 37, 38). Not being used to his experimental style, Pinter's plays remained largely unpopular at that time.

Theatre of Cruelty and Plague

Apart from the personal pain, the pain as demonstrated by the violence and cruelty in the theatres of Kane and Pinter may largely explain their unpopularity. As have mentioned briefly, violence is common in both of the writers' works. The notoriety of Kane's plays can be explained by all those bloody tortures- plays such as *Blasted* and *Cleansed*, for example, demonstrate apparent sado- masochism. The violence in Pinter's plays, on the other hand, is largely mental instead of physical abuse- this can be best proved by the personal politics and psychological games of his early dramas. *The Birthday Party*, for instance, is famous of its scenes on interrogation and psychological torture.

Kane has generally been regarded as the leading light of a new group of young dramatists named the New Brutalists. As James Christopher commented, *Blasted* was considered by many to be the precursor "that put critics on their toes about a new strain of writing and a new kind of audience" (Qtd. in Saunders, 4). The new group of writers includes Jez Butterworth, Nick Grosso, Joe Penhall and Mark Ravenhill whose Royal Court debut *Shopping and Fucking* provoked great media prurience (Saunders, 4). This group of dramatists came to be known under a series of different names by theatre critics. Aleks Sierz, for instance, names these writers, together with even earlier writers from the decade including Anthony Neilson and Philip Ridley, "in- yer- face" writers (Qtd. in Saunders, 5). They are also known as "the New Brutalists", "the Britpack", and "the Theatre of Urban Ennui" (Saunders, 5). Michael Billington and Lyn Gardner attempted to theorise the background of the emerging generation of young writers: "New writing at the moment is...driven by a total disillusion, often jauntily expressed, with social decay: specifically with the breakdown of any binding moral code or common sense of decency" (Qtd. in Saunders, 5). There is often a sense of disarray in these writers' works; and the audience is forced to confront closely to actions of violence. Benedict Nightingale's remarks may give readers a general impression of these writers' works:

> "If one were to derive a capsule play from already performed work, it might involve gangs of girls adrift in a London where criminals dump bits of their rivals in plastic bags, rent boys are casually raped, there's a lively back- street trade in stolen burglar alarms, and voracious spivs gather beside ageing charabanc drivers dying of a surfeit of porn" (Qtd. in Saunders, 6).

The Artaudian theories on the theatre of cruelty may be useful for our understanding of Kane's, and to an extent, Pinter's theatre. Many express concerns over the type of theatre that the New Brutalists practice. Nightingale, for example, criticizes that many of the new dramas are "vastly entertaining" yet "radiate moral concern" (Qtd. in Saunders, 6). Tom Morris also expressed discomfort over the audience's proximity to the staged violence, "In very small theatres, it is impossible to walk out, so the audience is trapped in close proximity to the action, giving the playwright free reign to have his or her own say in the bluntest possible terms" (Qtd. in Saunders, 5). The cruelty in the theatres of Kane, Pinter and many of their contemporaries, however, can be justified by Artaudian theories. According to Artaud, we must reawake our sensations in this time of uncertainties and uneasiness: "In the anguished, catastrophic times we live in, we feel an urgent need for theatre that is not overshadowed by events, but arouses deep echoes within us and predominates over our unsettled period" (Artaud, 64). To Artaud, our sensations have long been damaged by the psychological theatre, which has rendered us "unaccustomed to the direct, violent action theatre must have" (Artaud, 64). Cinema, on the other hand, murders us with "reflected, filtered and projected images" that disconnect us with our sensibilities (Artaud, 64). We all think with our senses first and thus attempts to appeal only to our understanding are no longer helpful. Serious theatre should be able to challenge our thoughts, and to inspire us with unforgettable images that would finally react on us: "If theatre wants to find itself needed once more, it must present everything in love, crime, war and madness. Everyday love, personal ambition and daily worries are worthless except in relation to the kind of awful lyricism that exists in those Myths to which the great mass of men have consented" (Artaud, 65). Instead of focusing on scenes of masturbation, homosexual rape, eye gouging and sado-masochism, the violence in Kane's dramas arouses our senses and forces the audience to confront the horror on stage as part of reality. To a certain extent, the Artaudian theories can also be applied to Pinter's plays. From the early dramas that explore the personal politics and psychological games to the later ones which involve a broader political canvas, Pinter's works demonstrate extreme

tension. While the pain in Pinter's works usually comes in forms of psychological tortures, verbal assaults and interrogations, contest over the field of time and space etc, there is not a lack of real physical pain and violence.

Politics of Violence and Pain

A good way to prove the two's linkage to reality is their devotion to 'real politics', though both claim that they write only for themselves. According to Pinter, "...if you don't want to give some particular message to the world... you just carry on writing, and you're quite content. I was always surprised that anyone initially came in to see my plays at all, because writing them was a very personal thing. I did it- and still do it- for my own benefit... you write because there's something you want to write, have to write. For yourself" (Pinter, 11). Having no obligation towards the audience, he regards writing as an act of "freedom" and "celebration" when he can liberate his images in mind (Pinter, 128). He also regards himself as an "explorer": "As a writer, you're subjecting yourself and the society in which you live, and the world in which you live, to a critical scrutiny" (Pinter, 123). When asked whether he finds out his thoughts in the process of writing, he says, "I don't make any great claims for all that. I don't go away and say, 'I have illuminated myself. You see before you a changed person.' It's a more surreptitious sense of discovery that happens to the writer himself" (Pinter, 123). Being suspicious of what is told by the media, the government and the "vague language" of the "political systems", Pinter says he treats it as a citizen's responsibility to scrutinize the use of language (Pinter, 220). Only through repeated questionings of what is told can readers retain an independent mind and spirit. Kane shares a very similar attitude, only in a more mischievous manner. When commenting on *Crave*, for instance, she says what happens to T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* was that people got more interested in the notes that explain the poem than the poem itself. She says she does not want that to happen, and thus decide not to explain anything to the readers. It is true that many things that happen in *Crave* are secret codes to the readers, "who knows what 199714424 (188) means? I'm the only person who knows- and the actors- and I have no intention of telling anyone what it means" (Qtd. in Saunders, 105). While it may only be a mischievous remark, she does share with Pinter the idea that writers are to be loyal to the works themselves, not the readers.

A play has its own life, even political plays do. In an interview with Mireia Aragay, Pinter mentions how it is a great trap writing political plays because one already knows the ending before even the beginning. While political plays always deal with real issues instead of fantasies, Pinter says he tries to avoid sermonizing to the audience by being faithful to the play itself. A play stands on its own, so do the characters. Instead of an idea or a message, he claims that he starts with an image in mind, and these images give birth to ideas. According to Pinter, he is not aware of what will happen in the play. A play always unfolds itself. He also recalls the writing process of some of his plays. When writing *the Moonlight*, for instance, he said that the only thing he knew was there were two boys named Bridget and Andy; but he never knew what would happen between the two. These images just popped up in his mind. The same applied to *The Birthday Party*. There was once when Pinter met this fellow in a seaside boarding house who lived in an attic and who used to play the piano on the pier. He knew very little about this person but his lonely image in the attic remained with him. Pinter imagined what would happen if two people knocked on his door and this thought gave birth to the play itself. His intuition can be applied also to characterization. Pinter says,"...if it's possible to talk of gaining a kind of freedom from writing, it doesn't come by leading one's characters into fixed and calculated postures, but by allowing them to carry their own can, by giving them legitimate elbowroom" (Pinter, 24).

Still, many of the works by Pinter and Kane are read politically, mainly due to their personal devotion to politics. Kane wrote her very first play based on what happened in the Bosnian civil war, when after the collapse of Communism, the former state of Yugoslavia split into various small states striking for independence (Saunders, 38). Many of the areas around were turned into war zones. She also commented widely on the ideas of nationhood, war and peace, manipulation of the government, social inequality etc. Similarly, Pinter wrote and gave speeches on politics, commenting on various issues including human rights and political oppression in the States and other nations; the media; the language of freedom; the cold war; the British politics and so on. He also wrote open letters to the prime minister, and was an active member of various political groups. It may be interesting to point out how a writer's identity can greatly influence the reception of his plays. Though Pinter and Kane insist on the dramatic authenticity of any play, readers tend to treat what is being said as the authors' public statement. It is not surprising how

many of their plays are regarded as political acts, especially when the two were so actively involved in various political issues. In an interview with Mel Gussow, Pinter comments on how his identity is constructed: "[Harold Pinter] is not me. He's someone else's creation. It's very curious. Quite often when people shake me warmly by the hand and say they're pleased to meet me, I have very mixed feelings-because I'm not quite sure who it is they think they're meeting. In fact, who they are meeting at all. I can't explain it very well. I sometimes feel in others an awful kind of respect which distresses me" (Qtd. in Gussow, 25).

Yet, it cannot be denied that certain political themes can be deduced from both sets of plays. *Blasted,* for instance, is about pain and politics. The play is extremely brutal. What we see on stage is urine, blood, horror, sexual violence, death etc. At the same time, however, the play is political on many levels. As Saunders comments, it asks many uncomfortable questions about British identity. Ian, for instance, is Welsh by birth; yet he has been in Leeds for a long time. With his sense of national identity built mostly on "racism", he emphasizes "racial purity": "Come over from God knows where have their kids and call them English born in England don't make you English". He discriminates the "imports", and accuses the colored of taking over the city. As a journalist, he seems interested only in local news but not foreign affairs. Saunders describes his sense of nationhood as "narrow and parochial" (Saunders, 51). He also believes that Ian's involvement in the sinister organization, which is suspected to be responsible for a sick murder ritual, is motivated by his sense of Britishness, "Done the jobs they asked. Because I love this land" (Saunders, 51). Similarly, the soldier owes his killings to his duties for the country. Nationhood, therefore, is closely connected to sacrifices, to brutality and inhumanity. Even if one reduces the idea of power struggle to an individual level, the imbalanced relation between Ian and Cate also involves a lot of pain and violence. Manipulating the fact that Cate is retarded, Ian violates his girlfriend both verbally and physically. He regards her almost as a sex slave. He also bombards her with verbal assaults. Pain, therefore, is not presented for no reason; it has a lot of political implications.

On the other hand, Pinter uses space to present his political ideas, either implicitly or explicitly. In Pinter's plays, the most minute use or change in spaces can be politically implying. It is not difficult to notice that the question of how power is used to intimidate, to threaten and subjugate others is constantly raised in Pinter's works, and many times the idea of power struggle is illuminated by the use of space.

Party Time may be a good example. The play is about Gavin throwing a party in an elegant flat in London. While his guests "prattle of exclusive health clubs, idyllic island retreats, past romantic liaisons", a violent disorder is being savagely suppressed in the streets outside (Billington). The play ends with the intrusion of the external world in the shape of a burning white light and the presence of a brother of one of the guests (Billington). What is so interesting about the play then? Billington comments: "What [Pinter] offers is an image of a style- conscious, narcissistic, bourgeois society cut off from and culpably indifferent to the in-tolerance and squalor of the outside world. I was constantly reminded of those Bunuel films in which the privileged are sealed off from reality; and Pinter's point is surely that our lives are increasingly governed by an apolitical materialism in which it is uncool to get het up about injustice and corruption" (Billington). While occupying a comparatively more secure space, the privileged class chooses to be ignorant of what is happening outside. They decide to cut themselves off from the sufferings of the external world. Sarcastically, under the apparent elegance of the bourgeois society lies the brutality in relationships. There is a moment in the party when the death of a friend is mentioned with utter indifference. As Billington comments, Pinter depicts the world of "increasing moral coarseness and spiritual barbarism" where even the death of a friend can be taken as a matter of no importance (Billington). What seems to separate the secure inside and the brutal outside is only a thin wall of hypocrisy.

As seen from the political themes of the writers' plays, it is not difficult to notice how both playwrights are both aware of pain and violence being the product of the social and political institutions. The apparent self tortures in *Cleansed* actually represent systematic, institutionalized brutality, so is the cruelty of the army and soldiers in *Blasted*. Similarly, Pinter criticized against institutional suppression in later plays like *Mountain Language*. Drawing inspiration from the history of Turkish suppression of the Kurds, the play reveals the social brutality upon the minority. Pinter's position against institutional violence was made very clear in his Nobel Lecture of 2005. He criticized the "systematic brutality, the widespread atrocities, the ruthless suppression of independent thought" in the Soviet Union and throughout Eastern Europe during the post war period (Pinter). He especially condemned The United States for her aggressive foreign policy and her invasion of Iraq:

> We have brought torture, cluster bombs, depleted uranium, innumerable acts of random murder, misery, degradation and death to the Iraqi people and call it "bringing freedom and democracy to the Middle East".
>
> How many people do you have to kill before you qualify to be described as a mass murderer and a war criminal? One hundred thousand? More than enough, I would have thought. ..
>
> Death in this context is irrelevant. Both Bush and Blair place death well away on the back burner. AT least 100000 Iraqis were killed by American bombs and missiles before the Iraq insurgency began. These people are of no moment. Their deaths don't exist. They are blank... (Pinter).

He goes on warning us about the danger and aggressiveness of the country:

> The United States possesses 8000 active and operational nuclear warheads. Two thousand are on hair trigger alert, ready to be launched with 15 minutes warning. It is developing new systems of nuclear force, known as bunker busters. .. Who, I wonder, are they aiming at? Osama bin Laden? You? Me? ... We must remind ourselves that the United States is on a permanent military footing and shows no sign of relaxing it (Pinter)

To Pinter, systematic military brutality causes the hundreds of thousands of deaths throughout countries like Iraq or Nicaragua. Innocent people of flesh and blood are in the hand of the powerful, ready to sacrifice, to be manipulated and distorted just for the maintenance of their power.

Realism and Naturalism

Kane and Pinter share a common impression- they are both considered unreal and elusive. Putting aside the stage cruelty and physical violence that the critics dislike, what disturbs them most is the seemingly unrealistic nature of the two writers' works. First presented at the Arts Theatre in Cambridge and subsequently at the Lyric in Hammersmith, Pinter's *The Birthday Party* ran for only eight performances (Carpenter). Critics and the audience were not used to the particular style of Pinter, and it was Irving Wardle who first presented a sympathetic review in *Encore*, which deserves a detailed quotation (Carpenter):

> Nowadays there are two ways of saying you don't understand a play: the first is to bowl it out with the word "obscurity," once so popular in poetry reviews; the second way is to say that the seminal influence of Ionesco can be detected.
>
> ... Far from being a cautious verbal artist struggling to "throw away cargo to save the ship," Mr. Pinter has no difficulty in putting theatrical requirements

> first. No matter what you may think of the contents, the ship is afloat. And it is his very instinct for what will work in the theatre that has prompted hostility. [McCann] in *The Birthday Party*, for instance, is given to tearing up newspapers: we are not told why. But the spectacle of ... [him]... holding his breath while rapt in the task of tearing each strip of paper to the same width, took on a malevolent power perfectly in key with the play and requiring no explanation. This device is an extreme example of the playwright's habit of introducing an intrinsically theatrical idea and letting it find its own road back towards common sense. Mr. Pinter's way is the opposite of setting out deliberately to embody a theme in action.

Eugene Ionesco was one of the foremost playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd. It is not uncommon for critics to label Pinter as an absurd writer, yet very few understand the relation between the absurd theatre and the traditional, naturalistic theatre. In the 50s, plays by Ionesco, Adamov, Pinter, Beckett etc. were often dismissed as "nonsense" or "mystification"; many critics and theatrical viewers failed to comprehend the works because the absurd was still part of the developing theatrical convention which had not been well defined (Esslin, 21). Many regarded plays written in this new convention as inferior and incomprehensible:

> "If a good play must have a clearly constructed story, [these new plays] have no story or plot to speak of; if a good play is judged by subtlety of characterization and motivation, these are often without recognizable characters and present the audience with almost mechanical puppets; if a good play has to have a fully explained theme, which is neatly exposed and finally solved, these often have neither a beginning nor an end; if a good play is to hold the mirror up to nature and portray the manners and mannerisms of the age in finely observed sketches, these seem often to be reflections of dreams and nightmares; if a good play relies on witty repartee and pointed dialogue, these often consist of incoherent babblings" (Esslin, 21- 22).

Esslin has pointed out some of the important features of the traditional novels and plays. Under the trend of Realism, writers are like scientists who write with an unbiased and detached objectivity. While the difference between Naturalism and Realism will be examined in greater details in chapter one, they both share the feature of "mimesis", which is often used interchangeably with the word "verisimilitude", meaning "the appearance of being true or real; likeness or resemblance to truth, reality or fact" (Esslin, 5). The origin of the word "mimesis" comes from classical Greek tragedy where actors imitate "words and actions"; when the word is further developed as a critical term, its meaning has gradually expanded to encompass the imitation of "social reality" as well (Esslin, 5). Along with the

naturalistic movement comes with a form of treatment that embodies some fixed technical features. As Esslin comments, naturalistic writings always have "a clearly constructed story"; "recognizable characters", subtle "characterization and motivation", "fully explained theme", and a well organized structure with a beginning, an end and all problems nicely resolved (Esslin, 21- 22). A good example in drama would be Vaudeville, a conventional romantic comedy imported from France on to the Russian stage (Features of Vaudeville will be introduced in chapter one). It is quite clear that the plays by writers like Ionesco and Pinter pursue quite different forms and methods from those of the conventional plays- many of them have no clear story or plot; readers are not told the characters' background nor their motivations; ending is not clear, with problems unresolved. Yet, does it mean that works by the Absurd dramatists are entirely novel and unprecedented?

Works by these avant- garde writers are no deviation from the traditions of Naturalism and Realism, only that they are in a different reality that requires a new form of representation. According to Ionesco, the term "absurd" refers to "that which is devoid of purpose… Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless" (Qtd. in Esslin, 23). The Absurd Theatre, thus, represents the senselessness of the human situation; the abandonment and meaninglessness of rational thought, and its inadequacy of solving problems in our modern life (Esslin, 24). Both Pinter and Kane are skeptical of the reality. To Pinter, what is happening in the past is as hard to tell as what is happening in the present, as with what will happen in the future. While "reality" is a word which we usually refer to as something "firm, settled and unequivocal", it seems to be the complete opposite (Pinter, 22). The ambiguity of language also complicates the matter: "Do the structures of language and structures of reality (by which I mean what actually happens) move along parallel lines?" (Pinter, 182) Can one's perception of reality be truthful to reality itself? Does the way one uses language reflect or distort reality? It is difficult to tell. In the article "Writing for the Theatre", Pinter says, "There is certainly a good deal of prophecy indulged in by playwrights in these days, in their plays and out of them. Warnings, sermons, admonitions, ideological exhortations, moral judgments, defined problems with built-in solutions; all can camp und under the banner of prophecy" (Pinter, 22). Pinter warns readers against writers who tell them what to think, leaving readers in no doubt the truthfulness of their concerns; and writers who declare that they could see a

lucid picture of a certain issue. "What is presented, so much of a time, as a body of active and positive thought is in fact a body in a prison of empty definition and cliché" (Pinter, 23). Writers who generalize and stress empty preferences are taking life far too easily- it is a lot more complicated than empty cliché. Similarly, Kane regards life as wholly unexpected and chaotic- *Blasted*, for instance, is about how war and peace are only a step apart. The war atrocities, the brutality, the fragileness of stability etc are all something very real that happen everyday in the world. She commented on the press's reception of her debut: "The press kept asking why it was necessary to show such acts of violence on stage. I think it was necessary because we normally see war atrocities as documentary or news footage. And *Blasted* is no documentary. So suddenly all those familiar images were presented in an odd theatrical form which provided no framework within which to locate oneself in relationship to the material. For me, that's an amoral representation of violence- no commentary" (Qtd. in Saunders, 28). While we become almost indifferent to the bloody scenes on news report, Kane attempts to put them on stage, as if saying to the audience: look! This is real! This actually is happening! Many of her works also deal with problems of miscommunication and an imbalance of power, key themes discussed in the works by Pinter as well.

It is the striving for an integration between the subject matter and the form that a new way of representation is devised. Living in a completely different reality as their predecessors, works by Kane and Pinter can be considered innovations within the naturalistic tradition. To a certain extent, they are as real as the works by Chekhov and Ibsen. According to Morris, there is an important distinction between "realist writing" and "actual everyday reality"; realist writing does not function like the representational practice of photography (Morris, 5). As he further comments, we may point at a photograph and be pleased at the likeness it reproduces; yet language does not work the same way. Neither can language reproduce reality; nor are we pleased with a one- to- one correspondence. We do not demand writing to work like a mirror; materials have to be selected, ordered and rearranged; perspectives need to be imposed; to be true to reality, a blind reproduction may not be the most effective method- a writer needs to devise the most artistic means possible. As Wardle comments, writers need to find the best device to express his theatrical idea (Qtd. in Methuen, 49). We will examine closely how realistic both Kane and Pinter are in chapter one.

To conclude this section, we may look at the article "Selective Affinities: British Playwrights at Work", in which Reinelt comments on the importance of mutual support among writers (Reinelt, 305). The apparently novel works by Kane and Pinter actually exist within a theatrical tradition. As mentioned, both works are the link in a line of development that started with Naturalism and Realism. Their works allude to many different writers- *Blasted*, for instance, alludes to Brecht, Beckett and Ibsen; it also shares a very similar style with that of the Jacobean dramatists; Pinter's works, on the other hand, is constantly compared to Beckett's; he also mentioned Shakespeare's influence on him and his plays. Instead of treating the works as an entirely novel and unprecedented work, they can be connected to the old traditions, as Ravenhill comments, "...having learnt that none of my experiences in life are unique- that this must be something that previous generations of writers have experienced. There's a kind of continuum of great plays that you love, that you wish you'd written, that you know you can never write- and then something happens, you hear that tear- and suddenly it seems necessary to write new plays, and find out later how good or bad they are" (Qtd. in Reinelt, 311). All writers, no matter the generation, share the same story, the same experience as a human being. Existing in a complex historical time with reality being chaotic and unpredictable, however, writers can no longer stand on the same ground and cling on one particular style. A lot of courage and innovation are needed. As Reinelt calls for a collaboration of efforts: "...writers, young and old... committed to staging a response to and critique of what it means to be living at a particular time, in particular social formation, under particular political and legal structures and institutions. It is precisely this commitment that is explored in... The generosity and humility of Ravenhill's remarks link him across the generational divide to other writers, even in the act of claiming a unique voice, one that sets him apart from previous writers" (Reinelt, 311-312). Not only should all writers open their mind and embrace innovation, so do readers, and the audience. Writers are always people who think a step ahead of us- situating in a completely new time and space, we should perhaps listen to the plays and let ourselves be challenged.

The Open Wound- The Indirect Politics of Pain and Space

Are Pinter and Kane only about real politics though? What political effects do the plays have besides influencing on real politics? Such questions can be asked of any literature, but are given specific importance by Pinter and Kane. For example, as we see in 'A Note on Shakespeare', Pinter mentions "the open wound", which may be relevant to the above questions:

> The mistake they make, most of them, is to attempt to determine and calculate, with the finest instruments, the source of the wound.
>
> They seek out the gaps between the apparent and the void that hinges upon it with all due tautness. They turn to the wound with deference, a lance, and a needle and thread.
>
> At the entrance of the lance the gap widens. At the use of needle and thread the wound coagulates and atrophies in their hands.
>
> Shakespeare writes of the open wound and, through him, we know it open and know it closed. We tell when it ceases to beat and tell it at its highest peak of fever.
>
> In attempting to approach Shakespeare's work in its entirety, you are called upon to grapple with a perspective in which the horizon alternately collapses and re- forms behind you, in which the mind is subject to an intense diversity of atmospheric.
>
> Once the investigation has begun, however, there is no other way but to him (Pinter, 5).

Pinter goes on by talking about how Shakespeare is capable of touching on every single aspect of life: "he is a malefactor; a lunatic; a deserter, a conscientious objector; a guttersnipe; a social menace and an Anti- Christ. He is also a beggar; a road- sweeper; a tinker… a sun- worshipper and a gibbering idiot" (Pinter, 6). Shakespeare can talk in all possible manners and act in a thousand different ways. In a word, his works are everything.

The mistake that we, the readers, make is to pin Shakespeare down, for our convenience to scrutinize and investigate him. It is not uncommon for readers, the audience, critics and playwrights to play the role of scientists- we "determine", we "calculate", we bring with us "the finest instruments", all for the purpose of sewing up the wound (Pinter, 5). We are horrified with the scene of an open wound- the blood and the widening gap discomfort us. The act of sewing up the wound reminds

us of Susan Sontag's idea of art: "Real art has the capacity to make us nervous" (Sontag, 6). The naked power of art can sometimes be intimidating. We can feel uneasy and even dissatisfied if the world presented by an art is not a familiar one. We attempt to "reconcile" a text to our own demands, and summons to interpretation. According to Sontag, to accord to their view that the gods are moral, the stoics explain the rude features of Zeus and his adultery in Homer's epics as a union between power and wisdom: "Interpretation... presupposes a discrepancy between the clear meaning of the text and the demands of readers. It seeks to resolve that discrepancy... The interpreter, without actually erasing or rewriting the text, is altering it" (Sontag, 6). Sontag describes the modern style of interpretation as destroying and aggressive. It "depletes" the world, and turns the world into this world (Sontag, 7). To sew up the wound is to reduce Shakespeare. There is a lot of brutality in Shakespeare. The bodies and the wounds are prominent in his works. The wound, however, is not healable.

How should we read Shakespeare and literature then? Pinter says, you are to subject your mind to "an intense diversity of atmospheric" (Pinter, 5). Instead of reading Shakespeare in a fixed way, we should be open to him. "What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more. Our task is not to find the maximum amount of content in a work of art, much less to squeeze more content out of the work than is already there. Our task is to cut back content so that we can see the thing at all" (Sontag, 14). As what Sontag suggests, "transparence is the highest, most liberating value in art" (Sontag, 13). Transparence means experiencing the "luminousness" of the thing in itself (Sontag, 13). Our culture is a culture of excess. The urban environment bombards us with odors and sights, and overproduction dulls our sensory faculties. We are too used to analyzing instead of feeling. We forget to experience art as what it is, instead of what it means (Sontag 13, 14). As Pinter says, "Shakespeare writes of the open wound and, through him, we know it open and know it closed. We tell when it ceases to beat and tell it at its highest peak of fever" (Pinter, 5). Instead of investigating the source of the wound, we listen to the rhythm of its beatings, and feel the temperature of its heat.
Embracing it fully, literature can make differences. Literature can be bad; it can surprise; it can challenge; it can be ironic; it can praise; it can resist traditions and interpretations. Though literature can sometimes make us uneasy, the worst can show the most. As what Pinter concludes in his writing: "The fabric never breaks. The

wound is open. The wound is peopled" (Pinter, 7). In his works, Shakespeare shows "rape, loot, ravage, fraud, bondage, murder, interference, snobbery, lice, jealousy, snakebites, damp beds, falling arches... heat, dirt, riot, plague, suicide"; they all appear brutal, but is not life about all these (Pinter, 6)? Is not life itself "an open wound" (Pinter, 6)?

Pain in Kane's works, thus, illuminates the power of literature. With stage cruelty being a controversial issue, Kane was severely accused of the physical violence presented in the plays. As William Wollaston comments, "It is grievous to see or hear any man, or even any animal whatever, in torment" (Qtd. in Halttunen, 303). According to Halttunen, emerging in eighteenth century England a new set of attitudes and conventions is "the sympathetic concern for the pain and suffering of other sentient beings" (Halttunen, 303). The almost heroic image of "the man of feeling" is one whose tender- heartedness allows him to understand and share the torture of others; and this kind of man is of greatest virtue (Halttunen, 303). This humanitarianism was encouraged by society at that time as a "reformation of manners" and even a "civilizing process", with human sympathy extended even to the often despised like the prisoners or the lower classes (Halttunen, 303). This new humanitarian sensibility, thus, proves that the meaning of pain is always changing. As David B. Morris comments: "Pain is always historical- always reshaped by a particular time, place, culture" (Qtd. in Halttunen, 304). In western culture, representations of pain can be justified only under certain conditions. First, when suffering comes with a moral charge (Sontag, 40). Christianity traditionally regards pain as the punishments of sins; and pain is also considered redemptive as the sinners suffer to imitate God: "Pre-anesthetic culture responded to pain not with denial but with curious forms of affirmation" (Halttunen, 304). Second, when pain is represented in the name of Realism. For instance, modern art and paintings may present war scenes of nudity and suffering. They are only to depict what reality is like. Other than these reasons, pain and suffering could be considered pornographic.

Kane, however, uses pain and suffering to challenge her modern audience. Drama is an art that is defined by the bodily presence of actors performing on stage. In other words, the body is an important element which differentiates drama from other genres of literature. Yet, people tend to exclude the body, and read scripts as poetry or short stories. We usually read Shakespeare's plays line for line, for instance, instead of transferring what is on the page to the stage. Kane reminds us the

importance of the body, and challenges our senses with it: "I hate the idea of theatre just being an evening pastime. It should be emotionally and intellectually demanding. I love football. The level of analysis that you listen to on the terraces is astonishing. If people did that in the theatre... but they don't. They expect to sit back and not participate. If there's a place for musicals, opera or whatever, then there should be a place for good new writing, irrespective of box office" (Qtd. in Saunders, 15). Kane compares a good theatre to a football match, when you refuse to walk out, in fear of losing something (Saunders, 15). She believes that a performance is "visceral" that "puts you in direct physical contact with thought and feeling" (Qtd. in Saunders, 15). The fact that your internal organs are stirred stimulates your thoughts and emotions. In other words, before you can be challenged intellectually, you need to be challenged physically. Taylor has a similar idea- he believes that the intensity of the theatre is like "having your face rammed into an overflowing ashtray... and then having your whole head held down in a bucket of offal" (Qtd. in Saunders, 15); so does Benedict who comments that a drama should have an "almost unparalleled distilled intensity which is...unbearable to watch" (Qtd. in Saunders, 15). Kane's plays, therefore, challenge our usual understanding of bodies and violence. She attempts to make the theatre a disquieting experience. As mentioned earlier, she forces the audience to confront the fact that the brutality presented on stage is happening everyday in real life: "We live in a world of rampant cruelty, waste and injustice; we see it in every place, at every level. It's a given... Yet in theatre, this doesn't stop wealthy, healthy, middle- class folk looking at some inane subject like pensions or architecture or spying or newspapers and finding more rottenness than in any Denmark, more pain in any holocaust, more apocalypse than any Hiroshima" (Qtd. in Saunders, 14). Of course, pain in Kane's plays does not only mean to challenge us, it also conveys different metaphorical meanings; it may also be what the author was suffering. We will talk about pain in greater details in the chapter on Kane.

If Kane's plays amount to a bombardment on the audience's senses, Pinter's plays represent an embrace of emptiness and suspension. Pinter surprises us with his minimalism. As mentioned earlier, nothing particularly exciting happens in his plays, yet they are full of tension. His plays are like swirls that remain turning on the same spot. While the traditional theatre stresses the importance of plotting, many of Pinter's plays do not move forward. We are invited to examine the pattern of the

swirl. We are to feel its movement. We are to appreciate its turns. In other words, a play is an immersion in itself. In the chapter on Pinter, we would focus on the dilatory space in his works. According to Roland Barthes, the dilatory space delays the forward movement of an ordinary narrative (Qtd. in Rayner, 482). It is a space where narrative perpetuates itself; and when obstacles are provided to disturb the forward moving movement of the plot that usually drives toward the end. This space is, to a certain extent, political- it challenges our understanding and subverts our expectations on an ordinary plot, which usually is oriented towards a future end. It also frustrates our desire for a nice resolution. Things remain unsolved in the end. No conclusion is made. Many times readers are left in doubt.

The importance lies, therefore, in the presence. Gao Xingjian, in the speech named "The Case for Literature", advocates a similar idea: "Literature is only actualised and of interest at that moment in time when the writer writes it and the reader reads it. Unless it is pretence, to write for the future only deludes oneself and others as well. Literature is for the living and moreover affirms the present of the living. It is this eternal present and this confirmation of individual life that is the absolute reason why literature is literature, if one insists on seeking a reason for this huge thing that exists in itself" (Gao). Gao shares the idea that writers are not prophets. Neither foreseeing the future nor completing history is of any importance. The presence is of uttermost importance: "Literature does not simply make a replica of reality but penetrates the surface layers and reaches deep into the inner workings of reality; it removes false illusions, looks down from great heights at ordinary happenings, and with a broad perspective reveals happenings in their entirety" (Gao). In Pinter's plays, emptiness can be a penetration, or an invitation for further examination; Suspension can be an accumulation of tension and meanings; a physical absence can be an aggressive suggestion of a psychological presence; nothingness can be a challenge to the audience's imagination and associations. Like Kane's use of pain, space illuminates the possibilities of literature.

To conclude, body and space, both important elements in performances, remind us the importance of openness, and of experiencing. Body and space resist the closed interpretation of literature, and bring to us the essence of performances. Theatre should not be restricted to intellectual discussion. It is about exploration of possibilities; about innovation in the use of spaces. It is about an assault in senses; and a letting down of defences. It is about physical communication. It is about actors

feeling the existence of the present, and to truly live in it. It is about hearing, touching, seeing and feeling. It is an open experience that allows a lot of freedom and creativity. It may be interesting to end the introduction with a poem written by Tufnell and Crickmay, which is about the relation between body and space in performances:

> Enter the space each day not knowing
> What you will find there
>
> Do whatever you need to get comfortable
>
> RUN YAWN ROLL
>
> Wake up/ energise the different parts
> Face fingers spine head toes ears ankles ribs
>
> Warm up exploring the space immediately around the body
>
> under behind beyond
> at the edge at the centre
>
> under the feet above the head behind the ears
> in a bundle spiralling moving out and back in
>
> Find new spaces and move into them
>
> Cover a lot of space
> each part of the body able to move independently
> in any direction
> (Tufnell, Crickmay, 52)

The poem is a reminder not only for actors and dancers, but us, the audience. If actors should feel every part of their bodies touching the spaces, so should spectators. In the coming chapters, we would investigate in greater details the relation between bodies and space, and how they illuminate the idea of pain.

2
A New Understanding of Reality: Innovation within the Canon of Realism and Naturalism

Critics' Comments on *Blasted* and *The Birthday Party*

Blasted and *The Birthday Party* were not well received when they were first staged. Looking back at the reviews, what disturbed the critics most about the works is their being non- realistic, in terms of both the content and the form. Graham Saunders has quoted two newspaper reviews in his work, which perfectly demonstrate the critics' ideas. The first is by Richard Morrison, who criticized Kane's play as being "half realistic, half symbolic": "She has a vision of life and she illustrates it with characters who are either over- written or incomplete, both more or less than real people, in order to be illustrations" (Qtd. in Saunders, 11). John Gross also commented on the idea of Realism: "At first you worry about the implausibilities. Then the whole question of plausibility ceases to arise, as the play loses its grip on any kind of reality and careers off into a gratuitous welter of carnage, cannibalism, male rape, eye gouging and other atrocities" (Qtd. in Saunders, 11). Critics' preoccupations with realistic plot and characterization were demonstrated most clearly by Tracy Letts, when she compared Kane's *Blasted* with Lett's *Killer Joe*: "His play grips you with its narrative every step of the way and its shocks and horrors spring legitimately from the characters, their background and their motivation. Ms Kane on the other hand, offers her audience scarcely a clue as to why her characters should behave as they do" (Qtd. in Saunders, 11). Similarly, for *the Birthday Party*, its debut in London was a critical failure. Being described as a "bewildered hysteria", it closed after only eight performances (Wikipedia). Like *Blasted*, *The Birthday Party* is quite elusive and mysterious. The play is about the intrusion of two men, Goldberg and McCann, into a house in a seaside town, where Stanley stays with a couple. The reason for the intrusion is not clarified, neither are the background of the intruders and Stanley's relation with the two. The play is quite a violent one, with Stanley being interrogated and physically assaulted by the tormentors. While the action of terrorization goes on, however, the audience is not given a clear picture of what is happening behind the scenes.

Though the works by Kane and Pinter appear novel, it is believed that they actually exist within a theatrical tradition. If we study *Blasted* and *The Birthday Party* closely, it is not hard to discover how Kane and Pinter allude to different writers. Kane herself said in an interview that the first part of her play was influenced by Ibsen, the second part Brecht, and the final part Beckett. Instead of treating the works as an entirely novel and unprecedented work, they can be connected to the old traditions- to a certain extent, both works are the link in a line of development that started with Naturalism and Realism. To understand fully this idea, a general introduction of the idea of Naturalism and Realism is necessary.

Definitions of Naturalism and Realism

Naturalism and Realism share the fundamental belief that "art is in essence a mimetic objective representation of outer reality" (Furst and Skrine, 8). Though some use the two terms interchangeably, they are actually different. Some regard Naturalism as an "intensification" (Furst and Skrine, 8). According to Furst and Skrine, Realism represents an unbiased and detached objectivity; while Naturalism has specific views and assumptions about reality. These assumptions are mainly to do with natural science: while both share the feature of mimesis, Naturalism places great emphasis on the influence of the "immediate circumstances", the "environment" and "heredity" on human beings (Furst and Skrine, 18). One of the key founders of Naturalism, Emile Zola, treats his novels as a scientific study: "My aim was above all a scientific one" (Qtd. in Furst and Skrine, 28). He describes himself working "like a doctor" on "the study of a strange physiological case" to produce "bare, live anatomical specimens"; while his characters are all "human animals...dominated by their nerves and blood, devoid of free will" (Qtd. in Furst and Skrine, 28-29). The affinity to science emphasized by Naturalists is due to the background of Naturalism, with the rise of materialism consequent to industrialization and the progress in the sciences. In other words, Naturalism is more "concrete" and more "limited" than Realism (Furst, Skrine, 8).

The highly scientific nature of the naturalistic movement also influences its writing styles. With a background primarily influenced by scientific development, the naturalistic approach is also a technical one. Gottlieb has attempted to explain the stylistic norms in novels and drama. In novels, the naturalistic writers tend to present

characters as case studies which illustrate human behavior or social problems; in drama, the development of the vaudeville was hugely influential. In the eighteenth century, vaudeville was a conventional romantic comedy imported from France on to the Russian stage. Traditionally the vaudeville and the other forms of Russian comedy were regarded as pure imitations or translations of the French originals, which aimed primarily at amusing and entertaining the audience. The seemingly vulgar nature of the form made it less vulnerable to strict censorship; it began to shift its function and became varied in nature. Some authors began to see its potential to be developed into serious national comedy which could be used for social criticisms. Various kinds of vaudeville were developed in the nineteenth century, but they all shared a set of technical features common to all forms of Russian comedy. One feature was the presentation of "stock characters" and "stock situations". According to Gottlieb, characters were all categorized; they were drawn as the personification of a "vice" or a "virtue"; a "hero" or a "heroine" etc. The characterization was thus "stereotyped" and "two dimensional" (Gottlieb, 29). Their names might indicate their nature; and the characters were usually endowed with a certain mode of speech which corresponded to their social class or profession. At that time, it was rare for a writer to illuminate a character using action, which was mostly designed for comic effects. The characters did little to precipitate the action, and were placed in "stock situations" with static features: "Plots in vaudeville almost always revolve around the struggles of the enamored couple with obstacles impeding their happiness, which, in the end, they successfully overcome. Interwoven in the plot are current motifs dealing with customs, literature and, occasionally, social topics" (Gottlieb, 36). The resolution of Vaudeville is named the "denouement", a typical happy ending with much of the information revealed through a carefully veiled exposition, a reversal of fortune and a quick restoration of order (Gottlieb, 36). According to Christopher Innes, an example of Vaudeville would be the "well- made play", which denotes the comedies and melodramas written by a 19th century French writer Eugene Scribe (Innes, 7). The plays are famous for their "carefully constructed suspense": "The story usually turned upon some secret, of which the audience was aware, but of which the hero knew nothing until the truth was conveniently revealed at the critical moment... It is little wonder that characters and situations looked much the same from play to play. Yet it was an immensely successful arrangement, and well into the twentieth century the aspiring playwright could still have found rules for writing a

well- made play" (Innes, 7). Most of the well made plays follow a strict format. As what Innes has pointed out, the plot is usually one that involves some secrets and ends with a revelation of truth. The characters and the situations involved are more or less similar in different plays.

The Ambiguity of Naturalism

While Naturalism and Realism have become the standard against which many subsequent modern plays have measured themselves, the two terms are highly ambiguous, and the related concepts "nature" and "reality" take different forms in different periods. The word "real", for instance, has gathered a wide set of meanings over time. According to The Oxford English Dictionary, "real" can mean 'Having an objective existence; actually existing physically as a thing, substantial; not imaginary"; at the same time, however, it can also mean something that expresses "a subjective relation to a person; actual, significant; able to be grasped by the imagination" (Oxford English Dictionary). The word "natural", on the other hand, is equally amiguous. According to Christopher Innes, "natural" is originally related to justice, which was "based upon innate moral feeling; instinctively felt to be right"; the word later evolved into "a state of nature, without spiritual enlightenment" (Innes, 3). The contradictory definitions of the same term show that our perceptions of what is "real" and "natural" change over time. "Realistic" or "naturalistic" qualities are mostly determined by public receptions or conventions, and they can evolve.

Besides the ambiguity of the terms Naturalism and Realism, the Naturalistic movement has also been condemned by its successors that the practice is itself untenable- there is no such thing as complete objectivity. Furst and Skrine name the Naturalistic fallacy as "the pursuit of the illusion of reality" (Furst, Skrine, 60). Here, it may be useful if we look at the modernist and postmodernist critiques of Realism. What modernist writers largely reject in the realists is their "complacent moral certainty", and "over- rational coherence" that underpinned the plot structure, point of view and characterization etc (Morris, 24). Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer from the Frankfurt School criticize the Enlightenment as a form of "rational functionalism": "In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant" (Morris, 18). In other words,

knowledge was used, during the Enlightenment, as a form of empowerment. People were hostile towards uncertainty and mystery. This functional pursuit of knowledge thus led to greater "rationalization and systematization" (Morris, 18). According to the two, instead of being true to reality, realist novels portray a world that appears familiar and predictable. People are stereotyped and classified. Behaviors that deviate from norms are punished; those that conform are rewarded. This kind of writing preaches the idea that "this is how society is and should be". It does not liberate art from the possible evils of society, but further entraps it within the existing system.

According to Morris, the rational ground of the Enlightenment was being further ridiculed in the second half of the twentieth century, when postmodern critics like Lyotard and Barthes reject the human capacity to create knowledge (Morris, 24). Contrary to the claims of the realists that writings can convey knowledge of the world, the postmodern critics regard all knowledge as fictional. To them, reality presented in the realist writings equals only "cultural stories and interpretations that we impose upon existence to create meaning for ourselves and of ourselves" (Morris, 30). Lyotard, for instance, criticizes Realism for its ideological conservatism. Instead of evoking reality, he regards it as preserving "certain consciousnesses from doubt" (Qtd. in Morris, 30-31). By drawing upon familiar and stereotypical images, language, narrative etc, Realist writings feed the nostalgic desire of "moral certainties" and "experiential coherence", creating a familiar world with an illusion of totality (Morris, 30). This familiar world is thus very different from the "random, multiplying, synthetic hyper- reality" of late capitalism (Morris, 31). Roland Barthes distinguishes two kinds of texts, readerly and writerly. While the former reasserts the basic framework of our conceptual beliefs, like the binary oppositions between black and white, fast and slow, good and bad, the latter shakes the "assumed stability of conceptual meaning" (Morris, 34). Readers are asked by writers not to passively consume the text, but recognize the closed meanings behind language and actively produce meanings of their own.

Innovation within the Canon of Realism and Naturalism and its Importance

The ambiguity of the naturalistic movement may explain why the canonical selection of playwrights is surprisingly tendentious, even with the seemingly

standardized format: some works produced by the considered naturalists could be non-naturalistic, or even anti-naturalistic (Innes, 23). Furst and Skrine make an ironic comment that "Naturalism succeeded best where it seemed to fail" (Furst, Skrine, 71). One of the best examples would be Chekhov, whose work is presented as representative of Naturalism, alongside writers like Ibsen and Strindberg. Chekhov, as a doctor and playwright, admired Zola and his ideas on Naturalism. He shares the same ground with Zola on the idea that a writer should be as objective as a scientist: "In my opinion it is not the writer's job to solve such problems as God, pessimism, etc.; his job is merely to record who, under what conditions, said or thought about God and pessimism. The artist is not meant to be a judge of his characters and what they say; his only job is to be an impartial witness" (Qtd. in Melchinger, 69). Though Chekhov believes in faithfulness in depicting reality, he has a different understanding of reality, and thus a different manner of representation: this can best be illuminated by his experiments with the conventional vaudeville. As mentioned above, a conventional vaudeville always ends with a final point of resolution; Chekhov, however, wanted to reinvent the denouement: "I have an interesting subject for a comedy, but I haven't yet devised an ending. Whoever discovers new denouement will have opened up a new era! Those cursed denouement always escape me. The hero either has to get married or shoot himself- there seems to be no other alternative" (Gottlieb, 38). He does offer a different denouement in *The Bear*, a love story between Smirnov and Popova. The story begins with Smirnov, a landowner coming to the widowed landowner Popova to claim his debts. Having no respect for the grieving widow, the two nearly fight. Popova, though not a beautiful woman, reveals her tough side when confronting the assertive Smirnov. Smirnov falls in love with the special woman and the story appears to end happily with a prolonged kiss between the two. While the play would have ended after the "prolonged kiss" in a conventional vaudeville, according to Gottlieb, Chekhov "parodies the convention of the interrupted love scene to end the play unconventionally with...an anti- climactic proportional statement" (Gottlieb, 61). The "prolonged kiss" is unexpectedly interrupted by Luka, the servant, coming in with an axe, intending to rescue her master. The romantic scene thus turns into a comic one with the couple being surrounded by Luka, "the gardener with a rake, the coachman with a pitchfork, and some workmen with sundry sticks and staves" (Gottlieb, 61). Popova drags the romance into reality again by shouting "Luka, tell them in the stables- Toby gets no

oats today" (Gottlieb, 61). Besides the ending, the plot movement is also revolutionary- it is largely determined by the characters. The potential fighting of the duel is prevented by Popova's acceptance of Smirnov's challenge and the fact that Popova does not even know how to use a gun (Gottlieb, 60). It is, thus, the unconventional characterization that leads the characters out of the static situation, making the play closer to a drama of character. The characters are no longer reduced to stereotypes with expected features and behaviors: they are all unique individuals with interesting personalities. Instead of being subservient to the plot, the characters form an important part of the drama and are interesting to look at themselves. Does it mean Chekhov is not real when he refused to conform to the conventional way of writing? This would definitely be an incomprehensive understanding.

As we can see, stylistic norms can differ between one literary period and the next. To Morris, the epistemology that underwrites all uses of representation is the same- "an imperative to bear witness to all the consequences, comic and tragic, of our necessarily embodied existence" (Morris, 44); yet the rules governing representation can be changing over time, in response particularly to social changes and our thematic understanding of what constitutes reality. An example would be the idea of perspective in painting. While the Impressionists could rely primarily on their eyes, and paint in a way that reflected what their eyes see; the symbolists turn inwards into the world of the subconscious, and depict how the observer feels. As Innes argues, although the more mimetic the easier it is for the viewer to identify with the original, the "subjective distortion" created by the non- mimetic features is sometimes expected and can even add to the realistic effect (Innes, 15). In other words, however "unnatural" the impressionist paintings appear to the later viewer, they would still appear "realistic" to people at that time (Innes, 15). Brecht's pronouncement on *Realism* perfectly illustrates the idea here: "If we wish to have a living and combative literature, which is fully engaged with reality and fully grasps reality, a truly popular literature, we must keep pace with the rapid development of reality" (Qtd. in Morris, 75). In other words, reality means differently in different literary periods. Responding to different understandings of existence, writers should strive to create their own way of representation. They should invent a new form that goes with the new content. Another possible way of understanding Brecht is that literature is about innovation. Not only should writers keep pace with reality, they may even attempt to think ahead of time and change reality with their works. As

Edward Bond comments, good writers do not merely "make conclusions" about reality, they make a demand of readers by showing them "a new way in which to see reality"; they change "the means we have of understanding ourselves," and when we do, the reality is changed (Qtd. in Saunders, 190).

The development of realist fictions over the centuries can best illuminate how the form of Realism can be highly varied- in order to best represent reality, modern writers may incorporate non- realistic elements into their works; others may apply a less systematic mode of realism together with all genres. French novelists like Stendhal were anti- romantic and anti- idealistic, and adhered very strictly to the convention of representing things as they are. Morris names some of the features in his works: rejection of universal claims but particularized historicity, ironic secularism, incorporation of actual items from the newspapers and journals into fictional writing, rejection of romantic and idealistic notions etc. (Morris, 58). The direct and secular novelistic qualities of Stendhal were further developed by the subsequent generations of writers, including Balzac, Flaubert and Zola. In their times came the culminating point of realist achievement in France, when the central criteria of realistic literature became well established- writing as a scientific and observant activity, characters as products of heredity and the surrounding circumstances, the typifying of the individual and the focus on man in his milieu etc. Yet, if we look at the works by Zola, the important founder of Naturalism, we can see why his best works sometimes deviate from the rules of Naturalism. Morris comments, "Zola the naturalist is also a poet and romanticist" (Morris, 71). The best part of his work, according to Morris, is his transformation of the scientific observation and documentation into an artistic form of expression: "The power of his realism derives from his fusion of detailed factual observation of social reality with the visual intensity of dream or nightmare. What Zola brings to realism is the use of poetic symbolism and imagery to convey the awesome power of huge, impersonal industrial and political forces exerted on human life" (Morris, 71). Imagination, thus, plays an important role in illuminating reality in Zola's works. Some writers incorporate non-realistic elements like legends and popular culture are incorporated into their works, appropriating their qualities to realist ends. It is not uncommon, also, for writers to shift between a realistic mode and a non- realistic mode, or applying a less systematic mode of realism together with genres like science fictions.

The above examples may explain how Chekhov can be regarded as a realist. Like most realist writers, Chekhov believes that a writer should work like a scientist. The conventional form of vaudeville, however, contradicted his sense of reality: "In life, there are no clear- cut consequence or reasons; in it, everything is mixed up together; the important and the paltry, the great and the base, the tragic and the ridiculous. One is hypnotized and enslaved by routine and cannot manage to break away from it. What are needed are new forms, new ones" (Innes, 16). Life is a juxtaposition of "tragic" and "ridiculous"; writers should not impose a static form upon reality. His beliefs thus led to his chekhovising the vaudeville.

How Pinter and Kane Depart from the Traditional Version of Realism

Despite Chekhov's attempts to be true to life, Pinter and Kane would still consider him unreal because they do not live in the same reality. Chekhov's utilization of messengers in the plays, for instance, may appear unreal to Pinter. A messenger plays the role of a third party who gives information about the characters. He reveals to the audience the background of the characters, and even their internal desires and fears. In real life, however, we seldom get to know such in-depth details about people around us. Another thing that would be unreal to the two modern writers is the neat plotting. To further elaborate these ideas, we may look closely at both *The Birthday Party* and *Blasted.*

a. Mundane Surface of Life

It is not surprising that we regard Pinter as a naturalistic writer, especially if we focus only on the most superficial level of the plays. To briefly recapitulate Zola's naturalistic manifesto, Naturalism demands a writer be objective like a scientist, and make no attempt to impose judgments upon reality: the audience should have the freedom to draw their own conclusions. Naturalistic plays, thus, may appear boring and mundane to the audience because naturalistic writers aim to depict reality the way it is. As Chekhov says, "In real life people don't spend every minute shooting each other, hanging themselves, or making declarations of love. They don't dedicate their time to saying intelligent things. They spend much more of it eating, drinking, flirting, and saying foolish things- and that is what should happen on the stage" (Qtd. in Melchinger, 74-75). If we look at *The Birthday Party*, we notice that the stage

spectacle and the stage behavior are objectively and naturally depicted. The dialogues sound flat, trivial, and self important; the stage sets and props are casual household objects which follow the dimensions of ordinary life; the characters on stage appear still and sometimes almost dead like. Pinter has himself commented on the benefits of objectivity when he speaks of his film script for *Accident*:

> "...a novelist may need five or six pages to introduce a character, to tell us what we need to know about his appearance, age, bearing, education, social background and so on. In a film the actor just walks into a room and it's done, it's all there- or should be. So in this film everything is buried, it is implicit. There is really very little dialogue, and that is mostly trivial, meaningless. The drama goes on inside the characters, and by looking hard at the smooth surface we come to see something of what is going on underneath" (Qtd. in Gussow, 183-4).

The same can be applied to the beginning of *Blasted*. In the first two scenes, Kane's audience is lured into believing that the play is a naturalistic one, with the characters being placed in a seemingly secure space of a hotel, "eclipsed behind the invisible fourth wall, that anesthetic, insulating conspiracy Brecht found so dangerous to social engagement" (Wixson, 75). Ian, saying he has "shat in better places than this [the hotel room]", appears to be familiar with the setting of a hotel room. He moves comfortably around the space, going to the mini bar for a glass of gin and into the bathroom for a shower almost straight after he comes in. Cate, on the other hand, "bounces" on the bed, and "smells the flowers". Their trust and being quickly accustomed to the room fills the space with almost domestic properties of a home.

Underneath the seemingly smooth surface, however, both writers create an inner drama that constantly alerts and discomforts the audience. If Chekhov's naturalism aims at showing people "how bad and dreary your [their] lives are" and that they need to realize that and "create another and better life for themselves" (Qtd. in Melchinger, 13-14); Pinter and Kane's naturalism derive its powerful meaning by puzzling the audience, and provoking them to scrutinize what is underneath the seemingly mundane surface. To achieve this, the two utilize the ambiguous presence of an outside threat.

b) Behind the Mundane- a New Understanding of Reality

Despite its naturalistic appearance, the inner tension of *The Birthday Party* is always present. This section will be a close analysis of the conversation between Stanley and Meg in Act One, after Petey's exit. It will be a demonstration of a new understanding of reality. It will also show to readers the concerns of Pinter and Kane towards the reality we live in.

The part starts with a light atmosphere. Stanley takes on an active role in these earlier exchanges with Meg, when he obviously enjoys the teases and flirts. He starts off his "game" by making a provocative sound "Tch, tch, tch, tch", which successfully wins Meg's attention, who replies in a "defensive" manner, asking "What do you mean?" Stanley teases Meg by saying she's not a good wife, which he knows gets on her nerves since Meg always presents a motherly figure. He thus keeps on "infuriating" Meg with affectionate insults such as "Terrible", "Disgraceful". Meg, being simple minded, cannot defend herself successfully. She fails to parry or contradict Stanley. Instead, she keeps on using passive denials such as "I'm not", "He knows I'm not", and "It wasn't". Her failure to attack back further encourages Stanley to prolong this interesting flirting game.

This enjoyment of this flirty game is however, quickly shattered in a typical Pinterish way with Stanley's annoyance of his physical space being intruded. When it comes to the line "Me! I'm your visitor", we begin to feel the "inner content". Why should Stanley stress his identity of being a visitor? Also, why should he stress his being the only one? While Stanley appears to enjoy acting almost like a substitute kid for Meg, does he want to keep a distance at the same time? His inner conflict becomes obvious with his annoyance at Meg's intrusion into his physical space. Meg makes at least four attempts at physical contact with Stanley. The first time when she "ruffles his hair" as she passes to the kitchen, Stanley "exclaims and throws her arm away". The second time when she comes close to Stanley's table and dusts it, Stanley shouts, "Not the bloody table!" The third time she sensually strokes Stanley's arms. Stanley "recoils from her hand in disgust" and even leaves the room for the first time. The last time Meg tickles him after he returns. Stanley, again, pushes her away. Unlike Rose in *The Room*, Stanley feels insecure even inside the house. He dislikes his room- "It needs sweeping. It needs papering. I need a new room!" He leaves the room by the street door and smokes outside. In the film version,

however, he stays outside for only about a minute as the prospect of intruders from the outside world may be, to Stanley, even scarier. When he hears that Meg is expecting visitors, he turns very anxious. His fear of being "taken away" is obvious after Meg takes his tea away. He yells, "Who gave you the right to take away my tea?" There exists, therefore, an inner tension underneath the apparent peace, which is often shattered by either an external threat or an intrusion.

Blasted follows a very similar pattern. If we look at the conversations between Ian and Cate, we can see how bad the relationship is. Alarmingly, there are a couple of long silences in the beginning of the play: Ian starts off going into the bathroom and runs the water; he then takes a bath while Cate spends the time looking into every drawer and inspecting everything in the room. After Ian finishes with the bath, which must have taken some time, he goes back into the room, "looks at Cate a moment", and goes back in the bathroom again. We then hear his coughs and spits. He comes out and "pours himself another gin", and "sips it at a more normal pace". Not a single word is exchanged between the two in this entire part. Tension permeates the room. The alarming presence of the revolver only adds to the nerves of the audience. What follows is a conversation between a dying man and his naive lover. Ian is portrayed as a manipulator who is agitated and hostile. Though he keeps on saying that he wants Cate to stay, and that he loves her a lot, he has no sympathy towards his retarded girlfriend- more than once he ignores Cate's remarks and questions; he aggressively bombards her with a series of verbal assaults, questioning if she is a "nigger- lover", teasing her brother as a "retard", and that he feels sorry for Cate's mother etc. He wants to use Cate for his sexual needs. He insists on having sex and on kissing Cate eve though the latter rejects him. He obviously gets the upper hand with Cate's innocence and her being prone to unconscious fits. It is worth noticing that in the play, power imbalance exists not only between Cate and Ian: it is everywhere. Many times Ian mentions the "nigger", the "retard", the "colored", "the wog", the "lesbos", the "cocksucker", the "Jews" etc. He is very hostile towards these people, and regards them as those who ruin the peace of the country. Power struggle, therefore, exists also among people of different races and origins.

Like Stanley, Ian suffers from the constant threat of intrusion, and uncertainties like revenge and death. The danger of intrusion is prominent in the first act. He is highly aware of what is happening around him: right after he enters the room, he "looks out of the window at the street" to ensure his safety; he puts a revolver under

the pillow; he never answers the door himself, but makes Cate do it; he also "covers the mouthpiece" when talking on the phone etc. From his conversations with Cate, we learn that they are there to be away from certain people, who may take revenge for what Ian has done. It is suspected that Ian is a killer, who may be responsible for a "sick murder ritual". The threat comes not only from the outside, but from Ian himself. He has bad lungs, with one taken out which "stank" like "rotting pork"; and he will very soon die of "cirrhosis". The constant presence of the intense pain in his chest thus reminds him of the threat of death. When Cate comments that she couldn't leave her mum, Ian says, "Have to one day", which very likely means death. He also talks about how he would enjoy himself while being still alive.

Though many of the above observations on the characters' exchanges and behaviors appear trivial, what the plays convey is that the invisible threat in reality can be made visible in the most mundane and unimportant situations. While people may appear to be doing nothing but "eating, drinking, flirting, and saying foolish things", a lot lies underneath the mundane surface (Qtd. in Melchinger, 74-75): "You have the rhetoric of the fee, the Christian, the democratic, but underneath the rhetoric what you have is excrement, vomit, urine, blood, mutilation, horror, deprivation, poverty" (Pinter, 73). Behind the scene, there is always the presence of perceived danger which is threatening and full of tension. Light atmosphere is quickly shattered; what people say always has an underlying meaning which hints at something unpleasant; and the two scenes are almost like a prophecy which foreshadows the happening of a tragedy.

What causes the threat? Two important explanatory causes are non-communication and the imbalance of power. One can see the common idea of non-communication in both of their works- as we just see from above, Stanley is very conscious of protecting his private zone; while Ian is also hostile to "invaders" like the "colored" and the "Jews". In real life, people keep themselves to themselves. Kane comments,

> "I was doing this workshop in Birmingham the other day and someone said to me: "I just want to know what you think about sub- text", I said, "If I say the woman was Polish, I can say to you, where are you from? And what would you answer?" And she said "Poland". I said, "Right, if I was writing this as a scene, what I'd have is me saying, where are you from, and then you saying are you racist?" That is what sub- text is. It's nobody answers the question.

> Everyone goes around it in some way. Everyone puts up some kind of barrier" (Qtd. in Saunders, 44).

People tend to keep to themselves, and underneath what they say is a multitude of unexpressed intentions and desires. Pinter also comments on how our language is highly ambiguous: "You and I, the characters which grow on a page, most of the time we're inexpressive, giving little away, unreliable, elusive, evasive, obstructive, unwilling." (Qtd. in Esslin, 44) Because of the characters' unwillingness to communicate, language can be deceitful. Words are often just smokescreens that hide our true thoughts and intentions. Sincere communication seldom exists: very often we communicate merely for the sake of courtesy

Besides the communication problem, reality is also about the imbalance of power which is the seed of many disasters. Kane comments,

> "I knew that I wanted to write a play about a man and a woman in a hotel room, and that there was a complete power imbalance which resulted in a rape. I'd been doing it for a few days and I switched on the news one night while I was having a break from writing, and there was a very old woman's face in Srebrenica just weeping and looking into the camera and saving- 'please, please, somebody help us, because we need the UN to come here and help us." ...I thought what could possibility be the connection between a common rape in a Leeds hotel room and what's happening in Bosnia?...and I thought of course it's obvious, one is the seed and the other is the tree. I do think that the seeds of full-scale war can always be found in peace- time civilization" (Qtd. in Saunders, 39).

The situation in the hotel room can, thus, be interpreted as the miniature of the war in act two. When Ian is with Cate, he is the one who has the say; but when the soldier comes into the room and takes Ian's gun, the soldier dominates the situation. Those who are armed, physically stronger or intellectually more competent have the right to control and dominate. They can thus use their power to intimidate, to control and brainwash the armless or weaker ones. Pinter, in an interview, also talks about his interest in the issues of "how power is used and how violence is used, how you terrorize somebody, how you subjugate somebody" (Qtd. in Gussow, 73). In *The Birthday Party*, the writer never mentions who Goldberg and McCann are, where they come from, what their intention is etc; neither do we know Stanley's relation with the two, if there is any. Yet, we are sure that they represent a source of power that controls and intimidates. Pinter addresses his concern about the imbalance of power not only in his works, but in real life. He has openly addressed issues

concerning human rights and political oppression in countries like Turkey through PEN and Amnesty International (Gussow, 65). He was also a member of the 20th June Group, which was a group of "anti- Establishmentarians" coming together to deliver addresses on topics like "censorship" and "civil liberties" (Gussow, 65). Pinter had very hostile feeling towards Britain, especially regarding the media, the government's tactics and its foreign policy. He talked about how citizens in Britain were being intimidated by the government, without even realizing that because of all the lies told by the media: "They (the poor) are essentially citizens without a role, and they are undermined, bewildered and intimidated. This is to do with a very successful pattern of lies, which government actually tells to its citizens, and ...which is repeated in so much of the media... We're told that this is a free country. We're told that we live in a democracy" (Qtd. in Gussow, 85). He also publicly condemned Britain for allying with U.S. in her foreign policy, putting countries like Nicaragua in a powerless and inhuman situation. Thus, one can see how, in real life, power can be used under a much larger scale and with much greater intensity. Compared to our predecessors' reality, ours is a complex one, with unknown threats and manipulations constantly haunting. A new understanding of reality, therefore, is necessary.

c) A New Form for a New Content

c.1) The Bomb in *Blasted*

One of the criticisms that *Blasted* received is about the inconsistency of styles. Michael Billington, while admiring the moral vision of the play, argued that the structural division of the play was unsound: "I think the connection between the Leeds hotel room to the war outside is never properly made, and I don't think you can simply have a bomb then translate the action from one place to another" (Qtd. in Saunders, 40). In response to the criticisms concerning the structure of the play, Kane's agent Kel Kenyon comments: "There is a bomb- it blows apart and we move from socio- realism to surrealism, to expressionism. So I think that was indicative of what she was trying to do. She [Kane] found existing forms quite constraining or restraining because those big structures offer a kind of security and comfort which I think she felt was dishonest" (Qtd. in Saunders, 40).

Kenyon's idea echoes what we have discussed earlier concerning the protean nature of realist writings. To remind ourselves of Morris's ideas, he comments that

"the epistemology that underwrites all uses of representation is the same- "an imperative to bear witness to all the consequences, comic and tragic, of our necessarily embodied existence" (Morris, 44). Yet the form of representations can be changing over time, in response particularly to social changes and our thematic understanding of what constitutes reality. To fully portray a highly vulnerable reality that can be ripped to pieces without warning, Kane experiments with different forms that go with the content. As she comments, "The form and content attempt to be one- the form is the meaning" (Qtd. in Saunders, 45).

The bomb is one of the most innovative uses of form- the suddenness and the rapidness with which it blows things apart symbolizes the unpredictable nature and devastating power of disasters. "War is confused and illogical, therefore it is wrong to use a form that is predictable. Acts of violence simply happen in life, they don't have a dramatic build- up, and they are horrible" (Saunders, 48). From the hotel room to the war zone, the atmosphere changes entirely. As mentioned, Ian also changes from a dominator to a victim. One can hardly believe how rapidly things happen. If we look at the nightmarish suffering that Ian and Cate are subjected to in the latter part of the play, it is obvious that the scene appears almost like a dreamy landscape. One of the reasons why the boundary between reality and dream is blurred is because of the devastation. Extreme suffering does look unreal, especially when it comes without warning. This idea will be explored further in chapter three.

Yet if we look at the first scene closely, there are warnings-- the intrusion of the soldier and the war atrocity can both be foreseen in the first scene. The bomb does blast things apart, yet there exist continuities between the scenes. As discussed in the previous section, scene one is almost like a prophecy that foreshadows a tragedy. The threat of intrusion is constant. The scene is permeated with an intense fear. Relationships remain sick and manipulating. Dark imageries like death, cough, spitting, and fits prevail. Doubts and riddles are unsolved. Words are smokescreens and there are unexpressed desires underneath. Yet, the continuities exist not only over the theatrical imageries. Kane points out how the relationships in the two scenes are parallel to each other:

> "With *Blasted* you do know what this situation is even though it's not specifically defined, and it's a two way thing, because the soldier is the way he is because of the situation, but that situation exists because of what Ian has created in that room, of what he has done to Cate…If you skip the connection

between all this...the play does appear to be completely broken backed, just split into two halves which means it fails totally" (Qtd. in Saunders, 46).

Many critics regard the solider as the double of Ian. Saunders, for instance, relates the soldier's rape of Ian to the rape Ian originally perpetrated on Cate. He notices how it is also carried out with a gun held to Ian's head. He also sees the brutality of the soldier a way to make Ian's cruelty to Cate seems "petty in comparison" (Saunders, 47). I regard them both, however, as self pitying victims. The soldier's confrontation with Ian, for instance, is almost like a confession. He admits that he has murdered, raped and tortured many people. His perceiving his repeated infliction of human hurt as loyalty to his country can also be understood as an attempt to justify his brutal act. He deceives himself by downplaying the severity of death and war atrocity: "It's nothing. Saw thousands of people packing into trucks like pigs trying to leave town. Women threw their babies on board hoping someone would look after them. Crushing each other to death.... Can't get tragic about your arse". More importantly, he persuades Ian to expose his story, identifying himself as a clean and ordinary person who has "got no choice" when serving his country. The relation between self pitying and exercising of torture will be dealt with in greater depth in the third chapter.

There also remains, after the blasting, the unity of place which again shows how fragile peace is. The entire action takes place in the hotel room even though it is turned into a war zone. The juxtaposition of war atrocity and domestic safety is highly suggestive here. Instead of conceptualizing the inside as a safe space and the outside as a dangerous zone, the division of inside and outside is "blasted". The soldier recalls going to "a house just outside town", raping the women in the "basement" and hanging the guys "from the ceiling by their testicles". While a soldier is usually associated with a war field, the soldier in *Blasted* appears in a hotel one; while soldiers usually remind us of bullets, armors, tanks, corpses, destructions etc., items that surround the soldier in *Blasted* are knickers, passport, jackets, pillows, a bottle of gin, and cigarettes- all domestic stuff that can be found in anyone's home. When a war zone is being placed innovatively in a hotel room, the seeming mismatch of spaces symbolizes, according to Kane herself, that there exists only "a paper- thin wall between the safety and civilization of peacetime Britain and the chaotic violence of civil war. A wall that can be torn down at any time, without warning" (Qtd. in

Saunders, 45). It echoes well the previous discussion about how our life is under threat all the time, and how vulnerable peace is.

More importantly, the intrusion of the soldier is not only a physical one but a mental one- the soldier breaks into the most private part of Ian's life and questions him about his girlfriend, his nationality, his sexual experience, his marital status and even exposes his morality about killing and torturing. Kane devotes two whole scenes to the conversation between the solider and Ian, in which the former confesses his experience of murders, rapes and other corporeal tortures. When questioned if he has ever executed any torture or abuse on Cate, Ian hesitates and says, "She's ... a woman", "It's never- It's not-", "Not like that". His opinion swings, however, when the soldier asks "What if you were ordered to?" and "In the line of duty. For your country. Wales." Though Ian appears to be totally sick of the soldier's brutality, we reckon that he is not without the potential to execute something equally brutal: he himself is a killer. Though he insists he is not a torturer, the audience is not told whether he involves in the "sick murder ritual" mentioned in scene one. We also question his sincerity towards Cate, an innocent girl prone to unconscious fits whom he manipulates and rapes eventually. The moral consensus of "torturing being sick" is further destabilized when the soldier reveals his personal story about his girlfriend being killed, and how he is only a normal person like anyone else: "You don't know fuck all about me. I went to school. I made love with Col [his girlfriend] Bastards killed her, now I'm here. Now I'm here". The soldier is no longer a soldier we see in a war field- he is not a symbol of killing and fighting for land, but a human being with flesh and blood. The innovative setting of the war zone, thus, brings about new perspectives which destabilize our thoughts and produces a critical attitude in the audience. It should be remembered that *Blasted* itself is the victim of media pressure and complacent moral certainty. The media pounced on *Blasted*: it could no longer be seen fresh as a piece of drama. Kane recalled how people got up and walked out when it came to the part Ian is raped: "when I was watching it and people got up and walked out, there was part of me that thought, 'why'd you come? If you're really going to get offended by a man raping another man, you knew it was going to happen" (Qtd. in Saunders, 38). Most of the reviews of *Blasted* focused only on the intense violence of its theatrical imagery, without looking at the context of the image. Our culture also fails to teach the audience the importance of judging a play on its own merits. We are too used to connoting these imageries to sex, obsessive desires,

cruelty etc. because of how these images are usually presented in the media. The ways pain and suffering are perceived in our culture will be further discussed in chapter three.

c.2) Mystification in *The Birthday Party*

Most of what we have discussed about *Blasted* can as well be applied to *The Birthday Party.* Although the threat has always been there, the intrusion of the two emissaries of a mysterious and brutal organization also comes with little warning. With the action of terrorization going on, the unity of place remains. The room, the safe heaven, menaced by the intrusion, turns all of a sudden into a place where Stanley is subjected to a weird interrogation by the tormentors.

Although intrusion is a key theme presented in *The Birthday Party*, critics pay a lot of attention to the play's mystification. Despite the constant "presence" of a perceived outside, Pinter refuses to give readers a clear picture of what is happening behind the scene. In *The Birthday Party*, the writer never mentions who Goldberg and McCann are, where they come from, what their intention is etc; neither do we know Stanley's relation with the two, if there is any. The only hint about their background may be from their memories, which are highly ambiguous. If we look closely at the exchanges between Meg and Stanley on the concert in Act One, we find that what Stanley says is unreliable and elusive. He starts by saying he has been offered a job, and when Meg asks him how long he will be staying in Berlin, he does not answer but begins to name places of a round the world tour- "We don't stay in Berlin. Then we go to Athens", "Yes. Then we pay a flying visit to ...er...whatsisname...", "Constantinople. Zagreb. Vladivostock. It's a round the world tour". While it is supposed that he is naming places where he will be going, he seems to mean that he has been to these places. Is he remembering the past or is he fantasizing? He also gives little away, especially when he mentions his father- "My father nearly came down to hear me. Well, I dropped him a card anyway. But I don't think he could make it. No, I – I lost the address, that was it. (Pause)"- Has he dropped him a card of has he not? How does he drop him a card when he loses the address? His language even turns poetic when he reflects on how someone carves him up and locks up the hall when he goes down to play- "All right, Jack, I can take a tip. They want me to crawl down on my bended knees. Well I can take a tip... any day of the week"- this is almost a poem. His pathetic tone makes it suspicious

whether he is romanticizing or dramatizing his past. His reflection on the past, thus, makes the play even more puzzling to the audience.

The mystification of *The Birthday Party* can be best illuminated by a letter addressing to Pinter, which raises a couple of questions about the play itself. A woman writes to Pinter after seeing *The Birthday Party*, and the letter goes like this:

> Dear Sir,
> I would be obliged if you would kindly explain to me the meaning of your play The Birthday Party. These are the points which I do not understand: 1.Who are the two men? 2. Where did Stanley come from? 3. Were they all supposed to be normal? You will appreciate that without the answers to my questions I cannot fully understand your play (Qtd. in Esslin, 37).

While the audience finds Pinter's works elusive and in no way realistic, Pinter believes that mysteries form part of reality. He replies the lady's letter in a witty way:

> Dear Madam,
> I would be obliged if you would kindly explain to me the meaning of your letter. These are the points which I do not understand: 1. Who are you? 2. Where do you come from? 3. Are you supposed to be normal? You will appreciate that without the answers to your questions I cannot fully understand your letter (Qtd. in Esslin, 37-38).

Pinter insists that he himself knows very little of the characters and the context of the play. In a speech published in *the Sunday Times*, Pinter remarks that he has limited knowledge of his own characters. His lack of biographical data of the characters is due mainly to two reasons. First, people tend to keep themselves to themselves, as we have discussed earlier. We do not like to reveal ourselves to others. We all need and treasure privacy. Second, he does not want his characters to speak for him. He compares himself with other twentieth century playwrights, and comments that "the explicit form which is so often taken in twentieth century drama is... cheating. The playwright assumes that we have a great deal of information about his characters... In fact, what they are doing most of the time is conforming to the author's own ideology" (Qtd. in Esslin, 38-39).

More importantly, intrusion, which is the main theme of the play, is never something clear. The characterization of Goldberg, for instance, is highly confusing. Very few critics attempt to understand Goldberg as an individual, most regard him as a gangster, or an organization man with the power to destroy and abduct. The intruder has unusual qualities—he has a dangerous charm that seduces; he speaks

with a paternalistic tone that is convincing; he appears confident and successful. More importantly, his mottos, and what he preaches, do not appear particularly evil or dangerous if we understand them out of the context: "What's happened to the love, the bonhomie, the unashamed expression of affection of the day before yesterday, that our mums taught us in the nursery?", "I believe in a good laugh, a day's fishing, a bit of gardening...", "I lost my life in the service of others", "Never, never forget your family", "Work hard and play hard. Not a day's illness". Putting aside the verbal violence, the frivolous charges, the brutal interrogation etc, these ideas are almost like ideas preached by a priest. Though Pinter does not reveal to us the true intention of Goldberg, it is suspected that he has manipulated his image of being truthful and virtuous to terrorize and control. Intruders can come in the name of an angel, with the unexpressed desires of a devil. Though what Goldberg preaches sounds positive, his manner of interrogation makes him like a terrorist. Worse still, he may be possessed by evil intentions, without his realizing it. In the end of the movie, Goldberg seems to suffer from a moral uncertainty. He says: "Because I believe that the world... (Vacant)...Because I believe that the world... (Desperate)... Because I believe that the world... (Lost)..." He hesitates. He cannot complete the lines. Is the intruder himself violated? Does he know his beliefs? Does he agree with his beliefs? Again, the character does not tell, neither did Pinter. Thus, intrusion is not easy to spot and understand. It comes with an obscure and mysterious appearance and motivation.

Mystification, therefore, only demonstrates to us what reality is actually like. Being too used to the traditional naturalistic writing, readers may have overlooked what exactly is happening around. Modernity does not improve communication: seldom do we get to know our neighbors or people around us; the government and the media brainwash us with all sorts of ideologies; unknown powers intrude our lives without our realization, and manipulate us for their interests. Our life, therefore, is a big unknown. Pinter tries to convey this reality to us by his plays: *The Birthday Party* may appear elusive, it is only an extreme version of reality.

Conclusion

The perception of "reality" has long been shaped by the tradition of Realism and Naturalism. Our literary tradition has "taught" us to think of what a realist should

be like- expectant and neat plotting, stereotyped characterization, fixated themes. Works that deviate from the conventional stylistic norm would be considered as obscure and unreal. Pinter's mystification and Kane's inconsistency, therefore, are both criticized and badly received.

Modern writers, however, do not share the same reality with their predecessors. Our reality is a dangerous one which is subjected to threat and the danger of devastation. The world is full of hypocrisy, manipulation, distrust, lies, instability etc. We are no longer leading the simple life of eating, sleeping and flirting. The conventional form of representation is no longer real to us. To keep pace with reality, and to be faithful to truthfulness of representation, writers like Kane and Pinter need to experiment with new forms that go with the content.

Although *Blasted* and *the Birthday Party* deviate from our common understanding of what realist writing should be like, they are both real in their own senses. *Blasted*, for instance, applies a rapid change in styles to show the unpredictable and devastating nature of disasters. Within seconds, the bomb in the play blasts things apart and turns the hotel room into a war zone. The apparent naturalistic scene between a pair of lovers becomes a dreamy landscape of extreme sufferings. Though the tragedy can be foreseen, the rapid change from order to chaos is still horrific. The blasting and the intrusion also show how fragile civilization is. Disasters can occur overnight with little warning. It can also occur in the least expected place. *The Birthday Party*, on the other hand, demonstrates to the audience similar ideas about the constant presence of an external threat. Pinter also heightens the tension by mystification- the background of the characters, the intruders and their true intentions are not clarified. Pinter he himself has limited knowledge of the characters. He refuses to create characters who speak for the author. He also believes how people in control like the government or the media are doing all sorts of things to hide us from the truth. His unwillingness to reveal the context of the play, therefore, demonstrates his intention to be real.

As reality changes from one literary period to the next, therefore, writers should experiment with different writing styles. It is not surprising to find modern writers applying non- realistic elements to realistic writings: some may shift between realistic modes and non-realistic modes; others may even apply a mode of realism together with other genres. The form of Realism, therefore, should be extremely varied and flexible.

3
Sarah Kane: Bodies and Pain

Introduction

We have discussed in the last chapter the notion of Realism and its relation to the works of Kane and Pinter. While their works may appear bizarre at the first glance, they are actually extremely real. We also suggested how the form of writing might change with reality- living in a completely different reality, the old mode of Realism is no longer applicable. Instead, Kane and Pinter invent new forms that go with the content.

In this chapter, we will study closely Kane's plays, with specific attention to the ideas of bodies and pain. Kane's works have been known for their bloody violence, and her debut *Blasted* was severely criticized for its cruelty. To understand Kane, we need to ask certain general questions: What do bodies and pain mean in our culture? Do they mean something different in the theatre? How about the bodies and pain in Kane's plays? Do the audience, the characters and the author herself share the same interpretation of pain? The following is an attempt to answer these questions by reading closely Kane's works, including *Blasted*, *Cleansed*, *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*.

Theatrical Cruelty and its Controversies

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Kane's *Blasted* was described as a "disgusting feast of filth" (Wikipedia). Press and the radio violently attacked the cruelty of the play. According to Edward Bond, television did not mention the play, though incidents of the sort in *Blasted* were reported regularly in TV news programmes: "Television deals with events, not their meaning. It deals with 'culture' only when it can be made an anodyne consumer product" (Qtd. in Saunders, 189). Kane also noticed how critics dwelled on the war atrocities, the rape, the breaking of the limbs, the cutting of the tongue, the sucking of the eyes etc without considering the context of the images.

Theatrical cruelty is never something new, yet the same controversies recur over many centuries or even millennia. Bermel, a critic, has examined influences upon Antonin Artaud's work by tracing back to earlier artists, one of whom is the

Roman writer Seneca. Seneca's works retell many of the Greek mythical stories by dwelling on their grisly aspects. Bermel gives several examples of the gruesome details in Seneca's works: in *Phaedra* a messenger describes the death of Hippolytus in great detail; in *Thyestes* the writer describes the main protagonist eating cooked portions of his sons in a banquet, and trying to fit together the bits of body that are left over after the meal etc. Though Artaud admires Seneca, Seneca's works are regarded widely as inferior compared to the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, with their being full of "unnecessary cruelty" (Bermel, 43). Even at that time, theatrical cruelty was received negatively, in a way comparable to Kane's much later works. Why was the press so hostile, yet at the same time so interested in discussing the pain and violence in *Blasted*? To what extent, and under what context, can *Blasted* be made into a "consumer product" (Qtd. in Saunders, 189)? To answer these questions, a deep cultural understanding of physical pain and suffering is necessary.

Susan Sontag, in her work *Regarding the Pain of Others*, discusses the idea of suffering and its representation. According to Sontag, sufferings are most often regarded worthy of representation under certain conditions, one of which is when they are understood to be the "product of wrath" (Sontag, 40). Sontag regards the statue group of Laocoon and his sons, the executions of the Christian martyrs, the various versions in painting and sculpture, the Passion of Christ etc. as images intended to "move and excite, and to instruct and exemplify" (Sontag, 40). The viewer may sympathize with the sufferers, and may also feel inspired by their faith in God (Sontag, 41). In other words, these sufferings are portrayed with a moral charge. Another justification for the representation of the brutal would be, according to Sontag, the duty to record in the name of realism (Sontag, 52). The eighteen etchings titled *The Miseries and Misfortunes of War* published by Jacques Callot, for instance, depict the war atrocities committed against civilians by French troops in Lorraine (Sontag, 43). According to Sontag, Callot's etchings depict the entire process of war, from the recruitment of the soldiers, to the final distribution of rewards, with detailed depictions of the violence and terror of the massacre, pillage, rape and execution. These etchings, to a certain extent, can be compared to the traditional war photography which records history: "Such pictures…convey a useful moral by showing the blank horror and reality of war, in opposition to its pageantry" (Sontag, 53). The representation of war scenes thus exposes the horror of war.

Yet, it is not rare for artists to present bodily pain and suffering for the sake of shocking the audience- and this makes their works highly controversial. Goya's etchings, for instance, are meant for this purpose. Captioned with phrases like "One can't look", "This is bad", "This is worse", "This is the worst!", "Barbarians!", "What madness!", "This is too much!", "Why?" etc, the account of war's cruelties acts almost like "an assault on the sensibility of the viewer": "The expressive phrases in script below each image comment on the provocation... A voice...badgers the viewer: can you bear to look at this?" (Sontag, 45). The "famous personages, atrocious crimes, superhuman devotions" etc in Artaud's theatre are, to a certain extent, designed for the "violent satisfactions" of the viewers (Bermel, 22, 23). Artaud claims that the theatre lacks an audience because it cannot cope with our secretive desires. Similarly, while there may be more subtle reasons for the representation of pain in *Blasted* and the subsequent works, another mischievous purpose might also be at work. When asked why Cate gives Ian that blow job in *Blasted*, Kane said, "I didn't know what to do at that point in the play, and I remember Joe Orton saying something about if you don't know what to do at a given moment in writing, then shock your audience- that's why I put that in" (Saunders, 164). When a representation of bodily pain and suffering intrigues our senses and desires, and embraces forbidden thoughts, it can dangerously resemble consumer products with indecent purposes. Without supervision of reason and conscience, artists can be satisfying viewers' voyeuristic interest in the name of art.

Yet who, the writer or the reader, has the right to judge if a certain representation is authentic or legitimate? The playwright is dead once a play is read or staged. Readers and the audience have the right to construct their own meanings. A writer's intention thus, can be misread, or even deliberately misread. In a Heath cartoon, "This time they've gone too far!", Ian has been replaced by John Major, the prime minister of the United Kingdom in the 90s; while the soldier represents the "Euro- sceptic" faction in the Conservative administration (Saunders, 85). The cartoon is about the political infighting towards Europe. In the 90's, Major's policy towards European Union aroused serious opposition from the "Eurosceptic" wing of the party and the Cabinet (Saunders, 85). Oppositions lay mainly on issues like the creation of the Euro and a further political cooperation between Britain and other European countries. The cartoon shows the soldier pointing at Major, raping him and says, "No Euro currency! Understand! No Federalism!" (Saunders, 85). The

cartoon is, obviously, not directly relevant to Kane's debut. It only extracts useful elements from the play for innovation and creation. Another possible situation is when readers are too accustomed to a certain form of representation that they cannot accept forms that are more experimental. Sometimes artists expand our thoughts by shocking us; sometimes they demand us to reconsider a certain issue or situation by providing unfamiliar alternatives to us. When a piece of work is not found worthy, it may be due to an absence of the readers' understanding, not an absence of the writer's wit- and I regard *Blasted* and some of Kane's subsequent plays as victims of this lack of understanding.

The Pain of Terror and Uncertainties

A close reading of Kane's plays can prove to us that the representation of pain is nothing voyeuristic, but highly metaphorical. First, it may be interesting to point out that physical violence in plays is now usually represented symbolically on stage. While the Globe Theatre productions may still be visually "bloody", with eyes "literally" sucked out and tongues cut, violence in many other productions is ritualized (Saunders, 89)". In Peter Brook's 1955 Stratford production of *Titus Andronicus*, for instance, Lavinia appears after the rape with "red streamers, symbolizing blood flowing from her mouth and hands" (Saunders, 89). A reason for such a ritualized framework can be due to the fact that fake blood and fake eyeballs can be extremely unreal, thus creating hilarious effects that destroy the tragic feelings; another possible reason is that the director does not want the audience to focus too much on the violence. Kane herself comments about the chopping of Carl's hands in *Cleansed*, "It's not about the actual chop. It's about that person who can no longer express love with his hands, and what does that mean? And I think the less naturalistically you show those things the more likely people are to be thinking what is the meaning of this act rather than 'fucking hell, how do they do that'! That's a far more interesting response to elicit from an audience because David Copperfield can do that" (Saunders, 89). Kane has pointed out the fact that violence in her plays does not mean only to shock you—there is an underlying meaning behind it.

Critics note how Kane's plays share similarities with many Shakespearian, and even Jacobean dramas in terms of the depiction of stage cruelty. Though not usually a point of comparison, Saunders is comparing Kane with the "New

Jacobeans", a group of playwrights who emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s, and include "Edward Bond, Peter Barnes, Howard Brenton and Howard Barker" (Saunders, 19). These playwrights are most interested in the depiction of "violence", and they also share a keen interest in the "grotesque" (Saunders, 19). According to John Russell Taylor: "Again and Again these dramatists are attracted to such subjects as child murder, sex, murder, rape, homosexuality, transvestism, religious mania, power mania, sadism, masochism..." (Qtd. in Saunders, 19). Kane, and the New Jacobeans, do share many of the same concerns with the traditional Jacobeans, one of which involves the belief that extreme cruelty can stimulate revelation in the audience: "If we can experience something through art, then we might be able to change our future, because experience engraves lessons on our hearts through suffering, whereas speculation leaves us untouched... It's crucial to chronicle and commit to memory events never experienced- in order to avoid them happening. I'd rather risk overdose in the theatre than in life" (Qtd. in Saunders, 22). Kane's understanding of tragedy as an occasion in which the audience experiences something imaginatively in order to avoid real tragedies, according to Saunders, is surprisingly similar to the philosophy of the Jacobean dramatists.

To me, a comparison can also be drawn to the beliefs of Howard Barker, another new Jacobean, and Antonin Artaud. Barker and Artaud compare the theatre to a "catastrophe" and a "plague" respectively. To the two, theatre has the obligation to transfigure the audiences- instead of actively feeding the audiences, the audience should be left hungry. Writing in an era of "authoritarian government", Barker considers the English theatre in crisis because it is easy that the dramatist's obligation becomes that to a political position. "Collaboration with the ruling order" can also lead to the "reproduction of stereotypes", "irrelevant didacticism" etc (Barker, 48). According to Barker, it is important that the audience realizes that it is living in a society strictly bound by "moral imperatives of gross simplicity", and that it must seek a way to free itself from the constraints. Instead of a theatre of intelligence, it is a theatre of pain that the audiences need to experience: "The theatre is not a disseminator of truth but a provider of versions. Its statements are provisional. In a time when nothing is clear, the inflicting of clarity is a stale arrogance" (Barker, 45). Similarly, Artaud rejects the idea of a theatre being a "battlefield for moral passions", or a place to "resolve social conflicts" (Artaud, 268). Instead of dabbling in safe formulas which conform to the external relationships, or telling what the

audience already knows, a playwright should "think dangerously"; they should be the "explorers of the imagination" (Barker, 46, 47). To Artaud, exploring the imagination does not mean a mere replication of the reality, but a double of "another archetypal and dangerous reality" which never shows itself plainly (Bermel, 20). How can we think dangerously? To both, thinking dangerously may mean an exposure to pain.

Pain has two possible interpretations. The first refers to an exposure to terror, violence, danger and forbidden thoughts. The theatre presents to the spectators the ugliness and evilness of life. Artaud compares the theatre to a plague, when the world experiences a complete crisis, an overtaking of the "dark powers" (Qtd. in Bermel, 20). A plague brings to the surface what has been hidden before, and it simulates "the dark, the unindulged passions, the abnormal feelings of mankind" (Bermel, 19). In Barker's words, it "lent power to the powerless by its embracing of the forbidden" (Barker, 115). Instead of presenting to the spectators what is pleasurable, the theatre forces them to face the possible worst that can ever happen; and the internal reality of their minds. The theatre is not a world of comfort, but one that makes manifest the cruelty of the world. "It discovers light in the unlikeliest places and air where it seemed at first impossible to breathe" (Barker, 123).

This pain thus generates the second pain, which is the pain of uncertainty. "In tragedy, the audience is disunited... Tragedy is not about reconciliation... After the carnival, after the removal of the masks, you are precisely who you were before. After the tragedy, you are not certain who you are" (Barker, 19). Pain has always been something we want to avoid. We have always strived to eliminate pain. In Barker's theatre, however, the audience is forced to confront and embrace the illegitimate. Barker demands that the spectators leave their morals at the door, and find in the theatre "the ecstasy of moral uncertainty" (Barker, 113). Instead of being educated, the spectators should find themselves in a "state of loss": "a state of lost morality, an ethical vacuum, a denial, a rebuke to order, a melancholy and a pain" (Barker, 116). Again, the audience experiences the pain of being left hungry.

Pain as a metaphor – *Cleansed* as a Religious Allegory

According to Bending, pain is not a brute given with a single, universally accepted meaning (Bending, 1). In this chapter, our focus is mainly on physical pain, which is crucial in both Kane's works and in theatrical performances in general: rape,

the cutting of the tongue, the chopping off of the hands, the swallowing of a ring etc. all involve physical suffering. Physical pain, however, is related to or can trigger a series of other painful experiences. We have just discussed the pain of the audience- the pain of confronting the cruelty on stage, the darkness of reality, and the pain of being left in doubt and incomprehension. What about the pain of the characters? How do we explain their physical suffering? Bending provides a series of readings: "those who suffer refer their physical discomfort to external systems of value: to suffer is manly, is the result of sin, is a sign of civilization and its attendant sensitivity, is the product of neurology" (Bending, 1). Among these reasons, the old Christian belief that pain is redemptive to our sins appears most relevant to the understanding of Kane's plays. Grace in *Cleansed*, for instance, resembles an ideal Christian in many ways; the punishments that she and the other characters receive also correspond to their sins. To a certain extent, pain in Kane's plays can be understood as a religious metaphor.

It is God who inflicts pain to keep humans on the straight and narrow (Bending, 1). Being brought up as a faithful Christian, Kane was strongly biblically influenced and she said that the ultimate source of the violence in her plays is the Bible (Saunders, 60). Christianity thus provides a dominant discourse for understanding the physical suffering in her works, especially *Cleansed*, which conveys explicit religious messages. Published in 1998, the play is set in a university which is transformed into a torture chamber under the rule of Tinker, who crushes any sign of love within the institution. The play portrays four pairs of lovers, with Grace and Graham leading the central relationship.

Grace closely resembles an ideal Christian, who struggles to come close to God through imitating Him. Graham, Grace's brother, dies in the beginning of the play because of an overdose. In deep mourning for the death of her brother, Graham returns as Grace resurrects him in her imagination. The most striking thing about Grace is her imitation of Graham. She dresses in his "clothes", takes on the "masculinity of his movement", his "facial expression" and even his "voice". Grace also finds that her essence and character do not match her body, just like a letter does not look like it sounds, and decides that she wants to change her body: "... So it looked like it feels. Graham outside like Graham inside". Tinker thus makes her most resemble her brother by giving her a sex change operation, in which he stitches on Carl's genitals onto Grace's body. Her attempt to resemble Graham reminds us of the

Christian belief that human beings should struggle to imitate God in order to be saved. The ideas that we are all made to be like God and that we should strive to resemble God are prominent in the Bible. In Ephesians, for instance, it says: "with that new and better self which has been created to resemble God in the righteousness and holiness which come from the truth" (Ephesians 4.24, The Holy Bible). A similar quote from Philippians says: "who, in the exercise of the power which He has even to subject all things to Himself, will transform this body of our humiliation until it resembles His own glorious body" (Philippians, 3.21, The Holy Bible). Christians believe that it is God's will that we resemble Him, learning from Him the great virtues of being rightful and holy; and our sinful body will then be cleansed and transformed to come close to the dignifying body of God.

The idea that Graham is compared to a God like figure is most obvious when Grace suffers the bodily pain. In scene ten, Grace is beaten and raped by a group of unseen men. Grace cries in distress, "Graham Jesus save me Christ". "Graham", "Jesus" and "Christ" are juxtaposed in one line and cannot be differentiated. When Grace receives the blows, she takes the pain with ease. She neither moves nor makes a noise, her body reacts to the blows but she remains silent, looking into Graham's eyes throughout. She almost welcomes the torture, saying "do it to me". Her attitude is a big contrast to that of Carl and Robbie, who keep begging Tinker for mercy. Graham, whom Grace meditates on, strengthens her faith throughout the abuse: he asks Grace to speak to him; he reassures her that nothing can hurt or touch her; and he teaches Grace to just switch off her head, and think of him. Grace's suffering, again, resembles the Christians who regard suffering as a test of faith in God. It says in the Bible: "For it is commendable if someone endures pain, suffering unjustly, because of conscience toward God" (1 Peter 2.19, The Holy Bible). Being able to endure pain and suffering is virtuous, and shows one's strong faith in God. It is also holy to share the pain of Jesus Christ who suffers for us, the sinners. As quoted in the Bible: "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving due requital for what we have done. But He has done nothing amiss" (Luke 23.41, The Holy Bible).The pain we suffer now when we are alive is redemptive in nature, because we are all born to be sinners. The pain we receive on earth saves us from the eternal and retributive pain after death: "there is a great difference between these two sorts of pain- the historical and redemptive pain of Christ and the anticipated retributive pain of hell, and the real pains of the here and now" (Bending, 7). We are purified of our

sins through the pain levied on us by God, and this pain is a lot less severe as compared to the punitive nature of eternal damnation in hell.

If we look at some of the physical punishments in *Cleansed*, we can see that they are not mere fantasies: they correspond to the sins of the sinners and are redemptive. The cutting of the tongue is a good example. Carl's tongue is cut out and he is made to swallow the ring Rod gives him. In the beginning of the play, Carl promises Rod that he will "die for" him, that he will "always love him", that he will "never betray him"; yet when Tinker threatens to push a pole up his anus, and asks Carl to imagine it is Rod raping him, Carl cries, "Not me, please not me don't kill me Rod not me don't kill me ROD NOT ME ROD NOT ME". He refuses to sacrifice himself for love. According to Proverbs 10.31 "The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out" (Proverbs 10.31, The Holy Bible). Carl is "froward" because he betrays Rod, he fails to keep his promise which is symbolized by the ring, and thus is made the swallow it. In the later part of the play, when Carl wants to write to Rod and ask for his forgiveness, his hands are chopped off. Tinker deprives him all means of expression, which is a severe punishment. In the Lovers' Discourse, Barthes quotes Freud and Gide talking about the pain of being unable to express. Freud says to his fiancée: "The only thing that makes me suffer is being in a situation where it is impossible for me to prove my love to you"; Gide also shares a similar idea: "Everything in her behavior seemed to say: Since he no longer loves me, nothing matters to me. Now, I still loved her, and in fact I had never loved her so much; but it was no longer possible for me to prove it to her. That was much the worst thing of all" (Qtd. in Barthes, 215).

Besides the redemptive nature of the punishments, *Cleansed* also bears resemblances to a religious allegory with the sequence of challenges the characters receive. As discussed above, many critics notice that Kane has a keen awareness of the classics, like the Jacobean revenge tragedies and Shakespearean drama, yet people differentiate Kane's work from Shakespeare by the plot: "Shakespeare was no slouch when it came to depicting horror and violence. But he did offer plot, character, poetry and a coherent moral framework. *Blasted* just provides incident upon incident of violence and degradation" (Saunders, 20). According to this perspective, violence should be built in a context that goes along with the plot, the character and even the moral framework of the play; in other words, violence should come with a reason. This idea refers us back to the earlier discussion on Sontag about the justification of

theatrical cruelty: there should always be a point in presenting violence, and the sufferings should either go with a moral charge, or be presented in the name of Realism (Sontag, 40, 52). In *Cleansed*, however, the absence of a clear plot creates an effect: the sequence of tortures that the character receive resembles the sequence of a Christian's experiences towards the final attaining of salvation. In the context of Christianity, all Christians who are predestined to be saved have to go on a pilgrimage, which is a metaphorical journey from the initial conviction of sinfulness all the way to death and to salvation. Throughout the "journey", the selected would be facing different challenges that test their faith towards God, and only those who resist all temptations would be saved. Similarly in *Cleansed*, the characters are put through a series of challenges which test their loyalty to love. Only those who survive through Tinker's tortures will attain the greatest love. Some people, like Carl, fail in the journey, like those Christians who fail the pilgrimage. It is, thus, not the tortures that matter, but the pursuing of pure love, their final salvation. As Kane comments, "They're all just in love… They are all emanating this great love and need and going after what they need, and the obstacles in their way are all extremely unpleasant but that's not what the play is about. What drives people is need, not the obstacles" (Qtd. in Saunders, 91). The absence of a clear plot and the abundance of obstacles make us focus on what the characters are going after: what happens does not matter most, it is the goal that counts.

We also notice how the "pilgrimage" the characters in *Cleansed* go through is one that consists of both trials and victories. It is a Christian belief that life is not only about happiness, but also about danger and adventure. The sweetness of life is always a prelude to severe challenges. At the time when Christian, the protagonist in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the last great religious allegory written in English, is up on "the delectable Mountains", he sees the most beautiful "Mountainous Country, beautified with Woods, Vinyards, Fruits of all sorts, Flowers also, with Springs and Fountains"; yet when he goes downhill, he approaches the "valley of Humiliation", where he meets Apollyon, the evil monster who declares himself king and demands Christian's loyalty and service (Bunyan, 54, 57). *Cleansed* shares similar moments of hope and trial. When Grace and Graham make love, "a sunflower bursts through the floor and grows above their heads"; after Grace receives the blows, there grow "daffodils" out of the ground. The flowers symbolize the survival of love through the most savage of situations. The sweetness, however, does not last. Readers or the

audience would expect Tinker to crush any attempts at the expression of love, and that the ecstasy of romance is only temporary. Like a Christian who always prepares for misfortunes, the audience can never enjoy the intense moments without worrying about the tortures that follow.

A Painful Struggle between a Religious Faith and its Loss

Christianity thus provides an important framing device for understanding the physical pain in Kane's works. At the same time, however, there are also signs of an estrangement from God in some of her works. The apparent contradiction may be due to the fact that Kane herself experienced a personal struggle between her religious faith and its loss:

> There is a debate I constantly have with myself because I was brought up as a Christian, and for the first sixteen years of my life I was absolutely convinced that there was a God, but more convinced...because it was a kind of Charismatic Christian church which was very much focused on the Second coming... that I would never die. I seriously believed that Jesus was going to come again in my lifetime and that I wouldn't have to die. So, when I got to about eighteen and nineteen and it suddenly hit me that the thing I should have been dealing with from at the age of six- my own mortality- I hadn't dealt with at all. So, there is a constant debate in my head of really not wanting to die- being terrified of it- and also having this constant thing that you can't really shake if you've believed it that hard and that long as a child- that there is a God, and somehow I'm going to be saved. So, I suppose in a way that split is a split in my own kind of personality and intellect (Qtd. in Saunders, 22).

Kane also commented that her estrangement from God was her "first relationship break up" (Qtd. in Saunders, 22). If we look at Kane's debut *Blasted*, Ian and Cate obviously represent two contrasting voices respectively that accept and deny God's existence. After Ian's rape, he is left blind and starving, and decides to end his own life:

> Ian: We're all bloody hungry, don't shoot myself I'll starve to death.
> Cate: It's wrong to kill yourself.
> Ian: No it's not.
> Cate: God wouldn't like it.
> Ian: There isn't one.
> Cate: How do you know?
> Ian: No God. No Father Christmas. No fairies. No Narnia. No fucking nothing.
> Cate: Got to be something.

Ian: Why?
Cate: Doesn't make sense otherwise.
Ian: Don't be fucking stupid, doesn't make sense anyway. No reason for there to be a God just because it would be better if there was.

Cate believes in God. She considers suicide sinful. She attempts to convince Ian, and herself, that God exists because people have "seen ghosts", some who have died and come back to life claim themselves seeing "tunnels and lights". She also prays for the dead baby, hoping that it would keep itself on the right road, not seeing "bad thing" or going to "bad places"; or meeting "anyone who'll do bad things"- her praying reflects her belief that only those pure of sins can go to the heaven. Ian, however, believes that there exists a God only because "it would be better if there was"- in other words, God is only a construction that people rely on for consolation. Does it not remind us of Grace in *Cleansed*, who lives on an imagined resurrection of Graham? Grace has Graham in her soul and body, yet Graham never truly lives: no matter how faithful Grace is to Graham, Graham is only an illusion.

Ian's idea of God being a creation corresponds to the philosophy of Elaine Scarry, who explains how people create through imagination in times of physical suffering. Scarry's work *The Body in Pain*, investigates the nature of pain and its relation to imagination. Pain, according to Scarry, is world-devastating: "the created world of thought and feeling, all the psychological and mental content that constitutes both one's self and one's world, and that gives rise to and is in turn made possible by language, ceases to exist" (Scarry, 30). In *The Wall* by Jean Paul Sartre, the writer describes the moment when a prisoner of war, Pablo Ibbieta, faces his sentencing hearing. Learning that he is to be shot the next morning by a firing squad, he perceives his body as an "enormous vermin" to which he is tied: "In its huge, heavy presence, the rest of the world grows light, as though all else has been upended and emptied of its contents. What was full is now an outline, a sketch, a caricature" (Scarry, 31). The annihilating power of physical suffering is also visible in the experience of the very old and sick people observed by Scarry- when a body breaks down, it becomes the only object of attention which usurps the space of all other objects. The content of their speech and perception is therefore limited to the food they consume, the dryness of their mouth, the soreness of the muscles, the room's temperature etc. The world is diminished to only the immediate sensations of their body, with their other thoughts and concerns being emptied of their content.

Scarry also explains how pain is objectless. She observes how pain can hardly be articulated using words; and usually when we experience pain, we produce only sounds or syllables like "Ah! Ah!" Scarry explains by saying that this shattering of language has mainly to do with pain being "objectless" (Scarry, 5). We do not simply have feelings, we have feelings for something or somebody. For instance, that "love is love of x, fear is fear of y, ambivalence is ambivalence about z" (Scarry, 5). No matter what states we are in, we can always locate ourselves easily in the external world and find an object of "expression" or "extension"- we warm ourselves with a blanket when freezing; we run away from an object of horror when afraid; we escape from duties and meetings when overworked (Scarry, 162). The blanket expresses our cold; the skeleton, for instance, expresses our fear, and the meetings represent our stress. There is not a thing, however, that represents our physical pain; and it is exactly this state of being objectless that leads us to imagination: "Any state that was permanently objectless would no doubt begin the process of invention" (Scarry, 162). When we fail to locate our pain in the external world, we start the invention process that helps us "move out and away from the body" (Scarry, 162).

Imagination provides what is deprived, and God is itself an invention. Scarry comments: "should it happen that the world fails to provide an object, the imagination is there, almost on an emergency stand- by basis, as a last resource for the generation of objects" (Scarry, 166). Scarry names this process of intentional imagination which invents a ground of objects which are beyond the naturally providing ground as "self objectification" (Scarry, 168). A step further from imagination is the idea of "work" (Scarry, 169). Work refers to the phenomenon of "externalization" when the imagined objects and artifacts transform from a pure concept within our mind to an actuality in the external world (Scarry, 170). Imagining a warm shelter, a person sets up a tent; imagining delicious food, someone bakes a cake. Scarry expands this idea of work to the religious dimension by arguing that the Christian scriptures and God are both created objects, with us human beings being the makers. When we suffer, we imagine the pain being "the chastisement of a father; or, at least, that it is, in some way or other, ordained for, or instrumental to good" (Bending, 5). This father in heaven will reward us with an eternal life shall we pass through all his tests of faith. Scarry's ideas explain Ian's saying that God was there only because it would be better if there was one- this imagined figure gives us

consolations and a meaning of life which help us survive through the toughest challenges.

This blind faith towards God, however, can lead to devastation. Grace, for instance, is the victim of her illusion. Being an ideal lover, Grace ends up being abandoned. Graham leaves her with Carl after the sex change operation. In the final scene, Grace sits next to Carl on a patch of mud, with two rats chewing at her wounds. She reflects on Graham- his death, his resurrection and his leaving: "Died. Burnt. Lump of charred meat stripped of its clothes. Back to life. Why don't you ever say anything? Loved Me Hear a voice or catch a smile turning from the mirror You bastard how dare you leave me like this". She questions his loyalty, and his forsaking her with no reason. She is totally haunted: "Think about getting up it's pointless. Think about eating it's pointless. Think about dressing it's pointless. Think about speaking it's pointless. Think about dying only it's totally fucking pointless". She can think of nothing but the love of Graham. In the end of the play, Grace is no longer a unique individual, but a double of Graham- she finds Graham not only in her soul, but in her flesh and blood. She has lost herself entirely. The play ends with the stage direction: "The sun gets brighter and brighter, the squeaking of the rats louder and louder, until the light is blinding and the sound deafening". These final images of a blinding light and the deafening noise suggest an idea of excessiveness; they also suggest the idea that one fails to see or hear clearly. Whatever goes for an extreme leads to a loss of direction, and thus devastation, including love. Kane commented: "There's a point in *A Lover's Discourse* when [Roland Barthes] says the situation of a rejected lover is not unlike the situation of a prisoner in Dachau. And when I read it I was just appalled and thought how can he possibly suggest the pain of love is as bad as that. But then the more I thought about it I thought actually I do know what he is saying. It's about the loss of self" (Qtd. in Saunders, 93). Grace loses herself in her love to Graham; do we lose ourselves also in the total surrender to God? As a faithful Christian, one must be fearful of God; be obedient to God like a servant; and strike in all means to please God. Is it not an even more extreme version of Grace's love to Graham?

From a faithful Christian to her later estrangement from the religion, Kane's change may partly explain the sense of nihilism in her works. Nihilism is a complex philosophical idea, and many philosophers have attempted to explain it. Nietzsche, for instance, argues that Nihilism is a belief that all imposed beliefs and reasons

should be repudiated. In *The Will to Power*, he writes, "Every belief, every considering something- true, is necessarily false because there is simply no true world" (Qtd. in Pratt). Discovering the fact that all values are senseless and all reasons invalid, Nihilism is a total rejection in all cherished beliefs; it is a collapse of meanings and purposes. As Nietzsche says, "Nihilism is... not only the belief that everything deserves to perish; but one actually puts one's shoulder to the plough; one destroys" (Qtd. in Pratt). The loss of religious faith and its frustration help explain the tone and feeling of nothingness in Kane's works. Reflecting on the ending of *Blasted*, Kane later regarded Cate's explanation that it is God who forbids Ian to commit suicide as almost like a joke- "Now I think it's hiliarious, but nobody else did" (Qtd. Saunders, 23). Having decided that her religion failed to tell the good from the bad, she decided to reject God: "I knew a lot of Christians who I thought were fundamentally bad people and a lot of non Christians who I thought were utterly beautiful, and I couldn't understand that, so I made a conscious decision to reject God and gradually my belief subsided. According to the Bible, I am now utterly damned" (Qtd. in Singer, 141). She also decided to live according to her own truths: "If you're not sure God exists you can cover your arse, living your life carefully just in case, as the priest does, or you can live your life as you want to live it. If there is a God who can't accept that honestly of that then, well, tough" (Qtd. in Singer, 141). Refusing to live carefully and fearfully to the standard that Christianity demanded, she declared herself her own master of life.

Nihilism and Modern Pain

The sense of Nihilism in Kane's plays, however, is due not only to the loss of religious faith, but to the despair of life and love- and this idea is best illustrated in *Crave*. Sierz describes the play as a medium for the four unidentified voices to "pour out their souls in a torrent of emotions, ideas, memories and desires" (Qtd. in Saunders, 104). It is not hard to notice how the voices indulge in the total immersion in self, either reflecting on their past or longing for an unattained. The entire play is permeated by a sense of nothingness and destructiveness. What *Crave* depicts is a mental landscape detached from a realistic, concrete setting. There are few points when the play refers the readers to an external, recognizable context. The characters are all riding on a metaphorical swing which goes between the past and the future,

but never stops at the present. C, for instance, is haunted by her past experiences. It is probable that she is the "dark girl" being sexually seduced by her grandfather, who exposes his penis in front of her in a parked car. She also talks about being raped by "a fourteen year old" on "the moor". A, on the other hand, is an ex-torturer of his beloved who is in turn being forsaken: "And I am shaking, sobbing in the memory of her, when she loved me, before I was her torturer, before there was no room in me for her, before we misunderstood, in fact the very first moment I saw her, her eyes smiling and full of the sun, and I shudder with grief for that moment which I've been hurtling away from ever since". People wander in the shade of their memories, trying to remember and explain the pain the past inflicts on them. "Love by its nature desires a future"- depite the burden of their past, however, they also pray that love flourishes before long. M wants a child in her old age. She wants to seduce B to make love with her. A child represents regeneration and continuity, and perhaps a termination of the paralysed situation M is in: "I was catching a plane. A psychic predicted that I would not get on this flight but that my lover would. The plane would crash and he would be killed. I didn't know what to do. If I missed the flight I would be fulfilling the prophecy so risking my lover's death. But in order to break the prophecy I would have to get on a plane which seemed destined to crash". On one hand, she wants a baby, and for her old age there is no time to waste; on the other hand, she has never met a man she trusts. They are all running after something that seems impossible, or purely illusionary: "You've fallen in love with someone that doesn't exist". Trapped between the guilty past and an unknown future is an abyss of emptiness. Many times the characters describe the feeling of presence in terms of absence. Being alive is like Estragon and Vladimir waiting for Godot, who will never come: A tells a story when an American woman offers to take a Spanish out for dinner but she forgets, and so "the Spaniard is still waiting for his dinner"; Being present is also like having a period that "never stops"; or wandering "here and there", finding someone who does not exist. The present has nothing to do with anything, it just exists.

Vicky Featherstone comments that *Crave* is "absolutely rooted in twentieth century pain" (Qtd. in Saunders, 108). What is "twentieth century pain"? Saunders attempts to explain Featherstone's idea by quoting the line from T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*: "We who are living are now dying/ With a little patience" (Qtd. in Saunders, 108). According to Saunders, *The Waste Land* was written after Eliot was

recovering from a nervous break down, at the time when Europe was slowly rebuilding from the devastation of the First World War (Saunders, 108). People barely recovered from the shade of the horror, and could hardly live. *Crave* is hugely influenced by *The Waste Land*, with its "use of speaking voices", its flagmented structure and its abundant "literary and religious quotations" bearing close resemblance to the poem (Saunders, 103). In terms of context, Kane also wrote in a time of chaos. As a writer, she had an acute awareness of what was happening in the world. *Blasted*, for instance, was inspired by a woman's face in Screbrenica that she saw on TV: "...I switched on the news one night while I was having a break from writing, and there was a very cold woman's face in Srebrenica just weeping and looking into the camera and saying- 'please, please, somebody help us, because we need the UN to come here and help us'" (Qtd. in Saunders, 38). Kane was totally captured by that moment and thus decided to turn the second act of the play into a war scene; critics also note that the torture chamber in *Cleansed* resembles the concentration camps in WWII- while Kane refused such political reading, she admitted that the situation of the Germans and the Jews "definitely had a strong impact" on her (Qtd. in Saunders, 94). Living in a modern world, what is most insecure is that people are told that they live in a "democracy", which secretly veils the inhumanity and the violence of power struggle behind it. When we see what happens in countries like Iraq, Africa and China- the riots, the deaths, the violence, the rape, the illegal, the insane etc, we all know that something far worse is happening which is beyond our recognition and comprehension. The government and the media are doing all sorts of things to prevent us from knowing the naked truth, which can be disastrous. Living in the modern world is like touching on only the surface of the abyss, with the unknown constantly haunting.

Not only is the social situation crucial in understanding the plays, the fact that Kane suffered from depression also attributes to the pain. Many critics suspect that *Crave* was written at a time when Kane suffered from the most appalling depression because her death was only a year after the play's premiere in 1998. Kane struggled with depression for many years, and was voluntarily hospitalized twice. She also recalled how miserable it is to stay in England: "Living in Birmingham for a year helped more as an artist by just making me feel miserable. I was living in a city that I simply hated. The only thing it really gave me was that I wanted to write plays set in a very large industrial city, which was extremely unpleasant" (Qtd. in Saunders, 39).

The pain that the plays convey is thus not only a historical pain, a social pain, or the pain of living in a modern industrial city, but the pain of herself- what does writing mean to her, as someone who is suffering from depression? Having dealt with the pain of the audience and that of the characters, we will study closely Kane's mental pain and its relation to her writings in this final section of this chapter.

Writing as a Pain Expressing, Pain Releasing and Pain Sharing Process

Kane's works, especially *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*, are highly personal. Kane herself realized how obscure her plays can be to the readers: "In some ways for me *Crave* has very fixed and specific meanings in my mind which no one else could ever possibly know unless I told them. For example, who knows what 199714424 (188) means? I'm the only person who knows- and the actors- and I have no intention of telling anyone what it means" (Qtd. in Saunders, 105). There are more examples of this kind of secret code: in *4.48 Psychosis*, for instance, there is a part with random numbers scattering on a page. The numbers are not in any apparent logical order, neither do they convey meaning in a visual manner. In another place, there lists a sequence of numbers ranking from big to small- from 100, to 93, to 86, to 79 until 2. Again, the numbers hardly mean anything to the readers, but to the writer herself. She was the subject of her own writing. In *Crave*, for instance, C mentions about her experience in "ES3": "If I die here I was murdered by daytime television"; "They switch on my light every hour to check I'm still breathing"; and "I tell them sleep deprivation is a form of torture". These experiences at "ES3" later become the main subject of *4.48 Psychosis*. It is probable that "ES3" is a hospital ward that Kane stayed in, as the play *Cleansed* was dedicated to "the patients and staff of ES3". Phyllis Nagy suggests how the plays represent a world that Kane exclusively inhabited, and how they are a total immersion in self (Saunders, 158, 159). Reading *4.48 Psychosis* is like reading a diary, peeping into Kane's private world and getting to know her secrets. What exactly does writing mean to her?

Writing, to Kane, can be a medium for the expression of pain. In *4.48 Psychosis*, the speaker describes madness as an emptiness of thought: "My legs are empty/ Nothing to say/ And this is the rhythm of madness"; "tongue out/ thought stalled". When the speaker suffers from psychosis, she loses her thoughts; and her body and soul seem to be driven apart. The only time of sanity is at 4.48: "At 4.48/

when sanity visits/ for an hour and twelve minutes I am in my right mind./When it has passed I shall be gone again,/ a fragmented puppet, a grotesque fool." 4.48 is the only time when the speaker is in her right mind. The play, named *4.48 Psychosis*, is thus a record of her sanity. Descartes says, "I think, therefore I am" (Descartes, 7). Men are superior to other animals because of our mental power. Our mind is capable also of controlling our body. Sanity is therefore a key proof of our existence, as the speaker says: "How can I return to form/ now my formal thought has gone?". When insanity visits, the speaker feels that her body "decompensates", it "flies apart". She inflicts pain on her body, wishing that the pain can bring her body and soul together: "beautiful pain/ that says I exist". Many times the speaker says, "remember the light", and that the light is "an instant of clarity before eternal night". "Light" here may mean her thoughts, or the sense of clarity. In *Crave*, C also attempts to record her thought. She buys herself a "new tape recorder and blank tapes" to "record the truth": "I crave white on white and black, but my thoughts race glorious technicolour, prodding me awake, whipping away the warm blanket of invisibility every time it swears to smother my mind in nothing". They struggle to remember their thoughts and thus, their sense of being alive. Writing, therefore, is a record of not only sanity, but also being. Of course, the writer also writes for the sake of expressing her pain. It can be noticed that some of the later plays are very angry. Expression is a way out of her emotions: "Sometimes I turn around and catch the smell of you and I cannot go on I cannot fucking go on without expressing this terrible so fucking awful physical aching fucking longing I have for you". The writer is almost obsessed in swearing. In different places she repeats "fuck you" more than ten times. The excessive repetitions of swearing or questioning like "How do I stop?" show the writer's intense emotion, and her desire to release the anger.

Besides writing for the sake of recording, Kane also beautifies pain through imagination and poetry. Again, the power of imagination plays its magic here- Kane transcends pain through fantasizing death and suffering as romantic and heroic. She comments how in the end of *Crave*, the characters decide to give up: "...the characters have all given up. It's the first one of my plays in which people go, 'fuck this, I'm out of here'... *Crave* was written during a process of ceasing to have faith in love" (Qtd. in Saunders, 108). The embracing of death is unexpectedly serene. Death is compared to the romantic scene of "darkness surrounds [surrounding] a collapsing star". Death is a unification with nature; being dead is being "assimilated

but not obliterated". Nature mourns your cessation of existence: "A pale gold sea under a pale pink sky/ A distant bell crosses the empty sea, / Clouds converge as I see I am on a globe, / Waves sob like a pulse"; yet it celebrates your rebirth: "Into the light, / As it was in the beginning"; Death is setting yourself free: "To be free of memory, / Free of desire"; and it is hopeful, almost an end too happy to embrace. The poetry contributes to the beauty of these images. The final part of the play, for instance, is highly rhythmical, and it resembles almost a requiem. The lines are getting shorter and shorter, and the pauses are longer, until the last page when there are only two lines left. We can imagine the scene getting quieter and quieter, until the voice of the speaker dies away in the end. The lines are also visually indicating, going back and forth, resembling something slowly falling. Yet, the speaker is not without doubts and hesitations. She, however, etherizes herself into believing that death is heroic. "Nowhere left to turn/ an ineffectual moral spasm/ the only alternative to murder": there are only two ways out, death, or an endless moral struggle that equally tortures. She knows the sin of suicide. She almost foresees the punishment of betraying God: "Gird yourselves: / for ye shall be broken to pieces"; "a scall on my skin, a seethe in my heart/ a blanket of roaches on which we dance/ this infernal state of siege". Yet she decides death in the end, and is ready to confront: "the wrenching begins"; "I know no sin/ this is the sickness of becoming great". She is forced to become courageous, when there is no choice left.

Kane may also have lessened some pain by sharing it with the audience or the readers. Saunders comments on how Kane's plays place the audience in an awkward situation: "It... places the audience in a strange position where we are not actually a theatre audience anymore but rather taking on the role of bearing witness". This idea is shared by Phyllis Nagy: "there is the sense that we- the audience- are not necessary. We don't have to be there. Which again I find fascinating, yet it goes against every instinct I have about how drama communicates" (Qtd. in Saunders, 159). The idea of witnessing the entire act of suicide is explicit in the end of *4.48 Psychosis*. The speaker says, "Witness me"; and "watch me vanish/ watch me/ vanish/ watch me/ watch me/ watch". Nagy describes how Kane may have wished to communicate in "a public and immediate way": "It does seem to require the desire to actively debate sets of ideas or emotions with a live audience" (Qtd. in Saunders, 161). It may be Kane's desire to communicate the play this way- the suicide is almost ritualized, resembling a serene ceremony. The poetry sounds like a death knell, with its pauses

and long silences; the speaker says her final words: "look after your mum now/ look after your mum"; having witnessed her pain and struggles, the audience has been prepared a long way for the unredeemable, yet dignified end. We are there to witness her death, like the way we witness the downfall of a great hero- her death is almost destined, and expected; and we mourn for her greatness. Is it, however, pure passive witnessing? Perhaps not. The fact that Kane actually committed suicide shortly after she finished writing *4.48 Psychosis* gives the play another layer of interpretation. She had foreseen her own death; she might also have foreseen people worshipping her work after her death: "They will love me for that which destroys me/ the sword of my dreams/ the dust of my thoughts/ the sickness that breeds in the folds of my mind"; She almost sacrificed herself for literature: "A glut of exclamation marks spells impending nervous/ breakdown/ Just a word on a page and there is the drama". The fact that we are re- reading or re- watching the play refreshes it. We give the play life- and that is what Kane desired: "the only thing that's permanent is destruction/ we're all going to disappear/ trying to leave a mark more permanent than myself". Literature is a more permanent mark, which is constructed by not only the writer, but also the readers. So, not just witnessing, we create.

Conclusion

Pain, especially bodily pain, is something controversial: the presentation of pain is usually justified only in the name of either realism, or moralization. Pain for pain's sake is sickly, and can be considered voyeuristic. Kane's plays, however, are neither sick nor obscene. The bodily pain and suffering in Kane's works convey three layers of interpretations which mean differently to the audience, the characters and the author herself. Kane belongs to a kind of theatre, with Barker and Artaud being most representative, which transfigures the audience by leaving them in pain- both the pain of being exposed to terror, violence, danger and forbidden thoughts, and the pain of being left in incomprehension. Hardly recovered from the shock, the audience is left in hunger- instead of being educated, the spectators find themselves in a "state of loss". The second layer of pain is the pain suffered by the characters. Kane's works allow a religious reading. Some of her works do resemble religious allegories, when the characters are cleansed through suffering. It is God who inflicts pain on us to keep us on the straight and the narrow. Yet Kane's estrangement from

God also makes the works ambiguous. Some of the works do appear anti- Christian at the same time, especially when an excessive trust in God leads to a loss of self. Religious skepticism, therefore, also leads to the sense of Nihilism in some of her later plays. Finally, pain to Kane, is something to be released, beautified and shared. Suffering from Depression, Kane expressed her pain through writing; she may also have attempted to idealize death and destruction though imagination and poetry. More importantly, we have contributed to the sharing of pain through reliving the play, in our act of reading and re- reading.

4
Harold Pinter: The Dilatory Space

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we studied the idea of pain in Sarah Kane's plays. We have attempted to explain the controversies of theatrical cruelty, and to understand the notion of pain from the audience's, the characters' and the author's perspectives. In this chapter, we will focus on the idea of space in Pinter's works. We will briefly look into the idea of dramatic presence in performance as an introductory context, and move onto the idea of presence in narratives. The focus of the chapter, however, is on how the idea of dilatory space creates dramatic presence in Pinter's works, along with the features of this space and its political implications.

Dramatic Presence in Performance and Narrative

The idea of "presence" is crucial in the learning of acting and performance. In *The Eye of Prey: Subversion of the Postmodern*, Herbert Blau discusses the ideas of doing and performing; life and art; the thing itself and its representation etc. How do we differentiate eating/sleeping/talking/writing in real life with performing all these on stage? This apparently obvious question becomes tough when we think of performances which include the activities of everyday life- the idea of replacing Total Theatre with Total Life: think about the 144 hour continuous performance *Days and Nights* by Alastair MacLennan in 1989, for instance. The gallery was open 24 hours a day, and some minimal eating and sleeping were involved (Tufnell, Crickmay, 169). The gallery had a shop window front, so that passers by could look at what was going on inside. Some stopped and looked, some sat for long hours and attempted to engage in discussion, some kept on returning. The performance is, to some, a returning to "unmediated experience" (Blau, 164). It means walking the way you have always walked; and eating the way you have always eaten even when you are performing. Theatre ceases to be the representation of life but the equal of life; Derrida writes: "The void, the place that is empty and waiting for this theatre which has not begun to exist thus measures only the strange distance which separates us from implacable necessity, from the present affirmation" (Qtd. in Blau, 166). Derrida's idea is to seal off the division between life and theatre. He urges the

abolition of representation. As Blau says, the enemy of theatre is "mimesis" (Blau, 166). We should learn to abandon "false acting" for "true performance" (Blau, 167).

Blau spares a great length of the article questioning the possibility of a nonmimetic performance, raising also the idea of the theatre being a "space of amortization": "By whatever means the actor achieves autonomy... the machinery of the theatre quickly disables the appearance and marshals itself around a space of subversion, so long as there is a performance" (Blau, 170). No matter how timeless a performance appears to be; how illusionary the "pretense of immediacy"; how skillfully the actor achieves "autonomy", everything is on "borrowed time", a "loan that can never be paid" (Blau, 170). Yet Blau admits there exists, in the theatre, moments like "a moon ray on a passing cloud or the subtle fascination of the glitter of snow falling"; and moments when the actor feels that absolute "aloneness" even when surrounded (Blau, 183- 184). Perceiving a performance aside from its outer show, like lighting, sound, costume, gesture etc, we will come to that suspended moment: "the latent substance of performance which is divisive, solitary, alien, and apart. Whatever the appearance or actuality of communitas, performance is a testament to what separates. In the empty space, an empty solitude. I may be reflecting no more than the escalation of estrangement in our time, the doubling of separation, when I say that remains the thing which is most moving in performance, and always was: its essential aloneness" (Blau, 183). Though hard to theorize, an actor can understand those moments when he achieves that distant aloofness, as if he had been separated from the rest of the world: this is the moment when he gives his full attention to the absolute presence.

In this chapter, we are going to discuss the space of dramatic presence, not in terms of performance, but Pinter's narrative. We will investigate how Pinter creates the moment like "the moon ray on a passing cloud" through language and the use of space; how the sense of absolute aloneness is achieved in a text. Alice Rayner, in the article "Harold Pinter: Narrative and Presence", discusses the same topic. She starts with the analysis of Pinter's infamous pauses and silences:

> "I am less concerned with the meanings of the silences, however, than with how such devices take part in a broader Pinter problem: that of origins, ends, and meanings; and with how they indicate the places where meaning becomes a problem and gaps occur in coherence of events... In this article I want to reenlist the strangeness with which Pinter was initially greeted, a strangeness

> that seems crucial to understanding how his plays work. And to begin I want to look at how he confronts the issues of narrative time with the devices of dramatic presence to maintain the strangeness. In the dynamics… of his texts I believe Pinter offers an alternative to a narrative order of time, desire, and authority" (Rayner, 482).

Here, Rayner points out two important ideas: "narrative time" and "dramatic presence" (Rayner, 482). What exactly is "dramatic presence" (Rayner, 482)? Does "dramatic presence" disturb "narrative time" in Pinter's work (Rayner, 482)? If yes, is it something specific in drama or is it not?

Before we move onto "dramatic presence", we have first to tackle the idea of narrative time and space. Time is a crucial concept in literature, especially in the reading and writing of narratives and novels. Frank Kermode, in his famous work *The Sense of An Ending*, establishes a connection between time, fiction and apocalyptic thought. Men's prediction of an apocalyptic end represents an attempt to impose a pattern on history; by constructing an end, it makes satisfying consonance with the beginning and the middle (Kermode, 17). History, or time, in its purest state, is disorganized. We humanize it by imposing a pattern on it. Kermode explains this concept using the idea of the clock's 'tick- tock': "The clock's 'tick-tock' I take to be a model of what we call a plot, an organisation which humanises time by giving it a form; and the interval between 'tock' and 'tick' represents purely successive, disorganised time of the sort we need to humanise" (Kermode, 45). Through calculating time using a "tick- tock", it is given a form that can be understood. Similarly, we impose a pattern on time in fictions by constructing a plot: a beginning and an end, and in many fictions, *peripeteia*, meaning an unexpected change in the movement of the plot. A plot is another method of humanizing time because it attempts to overcome the disorganization of time using a structure.

The need of an ending can also be explained by the idea of narrative desire. In the article "Narrative desire", Peter Brook writes: "Desire is always there at the start of a narrative, often in a state of initial arousal, often having reached a state of intensity such that movement must be created, action undertaken, change begun" (Brook, 38). To make a story readable, a plot should be constructed so that the story can move forward; and readers can go on constructing the text's meanings: "…no incident or action is final or closed in itself until such a moment as the ends of ambition have been clarified" (Brook, 39). Brook compares a plot to a motor which forever goes forward, and never stops until a destination is reached (Brook, 41). A

wish for the end of a narrative is a wish to know, as Jonathan Culler has written, "Plots tell of desire and what befalls it, but the movement of narrative itself is driven by desire in the form of 'epistemophilia', a desire to know: we want to discover secrets, to know the end, to find the truth" (Culler, 91). We start reading a novel almost with the aim to get to the end. Narrative ordering, thus, is oriented towards a future end. It is this coherence between beginnings and endings, and the signification of the ending, that Pinter attempts to challenge: he challenges it through the use of space.

Drama, intuitively, is not like narrative fiction because of its spatial dimension. When we think of narratives, we immediately think of time; when we watch a play, however, it has more to do with space. According to Roland Barthes, drama has its own means for creating "dilatory space", a space that delays the forward movement of an ordinary narrative (Qtd. in Rayner, 482). "Dilatory space" is a space where narrative perpetuates itself: while a narrative always moves forward, obstacles are provided to disturb the straightforward linearity of the plot: the suspended moments thus disrupt the forward moving narrative that drives towards an end (Qtd. in Rayner, 492). This space of suspension may be what Rayner refers to as "dramatic presence": "Drama complicates the problem of time by engaging in sequence and presence, development and immediacy, construction and accident" (Rayner, 482). Just like an actor being captured in the presence, separated from what surrounds him, this space indulges in the present moment. As Rayner writes, the question appropriate to drama is "what is happening now?" but not "what will happen next" (Rayner, 482). Pinter is interested not only in the motor, but the fuel stations in the middle of a journey.

The Dilatory Space and its Cinematic Features

Pinter is not only a playwright, but a screenwriter. In over two decades, he has adapted eight novels, as well as his own plays for television and film. He immersed himself totally in the grand project of adapting Proust to the screen, spending the whole of 1972 writing *The Proust Screenplay*. As he says in the introduction to the book: "Working on A la recherché du temps perdu was the best working year of my life" (Qtd. in Billington, 232). Pinter's cinematic intelligence, his rendering of Proust's ideas in terms of aural and visual motifs, is evident from the

famous opening montage of the thirty five shots. Billington comments: "What Pinter does is to conjure up impressionistically the various aspects of [the protagonist]'s life to be recalled, explored and ordered in the body of the film" (Billington, 227). The "Yellow screen", for instance, which appears in the first shot and then repeats three more times, is discovered to be "a patch of yellow wall in a painting" in shot 22 (Pinter, 5), which recalls a love affair in the book; the other sounds and images that recur throughout the movie, like the "unlaced boots" which convey the protagonist's grief towards his grandmother's death (Billington, 227); the "open countryside" and the "church steeples" that trigger a memory of the Combray house where the protagonist spends his childhood are simultaneously introduced with the arrival of the middle aged protagonist at the Prince's house for a party (Pinter, 3,5). Temporally, the movie starts at the end of the novel, the protagonist being thirty seven in his first entrance; he becomes a youth in his twenties in shot 25 and a boy of eight in shot 35 (Pinter, 5, 6). In less than 40 shots, Pinter reproduces the sights and sounds of the protagonist's youth; and we seem to have glimpses of all the important moments in his life. It is very likely that Pinter would share Proust's artistic belief, judging from not only this screenplay, but many of his later plays:

> "The reality that [a writer] has to express resides, as I now began to understand, not in the superficial appearance of his subject but at a depth at which that appearance matters little; this truth had been symbolised for me by that clink of a spoon against a plate, that starched stiffness of a napkin, which had been of more value to me for my spiritual renewal than innumerable conversations of a humanitarian or patriotic or internationalist or metaphysical kind" (Qtd. in Billington, 225).

Truth matters most, and the truth is revealed by digging deep into the unimportant: our memories can be triggered by a waiter knocking a folk against a glass, or a gate bell slightly shaking. We do not necessarily need to dig for truth; sometimes the truth lies "at a depth" of the trivial (Qtd. in Billington, 225). To Pinter, this depth can be achieved, with consummate skill, in a film:

> "...a novelist may need five or six pages to introduce a character, to tell us what we need to know about his appearance, age, bearing, education, social background and so on. In a film the actor just walks into a room and it's done, it's all there- or should be. So in this film everything is buried, it is implicit. There is really very little dialogue, and that is mostly trivial, meaningless. The drama goes on inside the characters, and by looking hard at the smooth surface

we come to see something of what is going on underneath" (Qtd. in Gussow, 183-4).

Many critics have traced the influence of Pinter's cinematic experiments to his later plays. Cima, for instance, comments that Pinter has attempted to "break away from the exposition-conflict-denouement grammar of the well-made play to create a more open semiotic system nearer the principles of film" (Cima, 43). In other words, Pinter has treated the stage as if it were a film screen. What kind of space in his later plays has Pinter created applying his cinematograph? What has this space to do with the idea of "dilatory space" that we discussed earlier?

a. Montage and Lyricism in the Narrative

Pinter is keen on creating drama in a moment. "I do hate the becauses of drama. Who are we to say that this happens because that happened, that one thing is the consequence of another?... Life is more mysterious than plays make it out to be" (Qtd. in Cima, 44). As Cima points out, many of Pinter's plays build on Eisenstein's montage theories; in other words, instead of lining up each scene that leads to a final revelation of meaning, he treats each dramatic scene as a shot that can be posited in various different ways to form different meanings. Through the splintering of the narrative, and the alternation of various scenes, the play allows many possible visions. As Cima quotes Metz commenting on a passage in *Pierrot le fou*: "[The director] is able to suggest with a great deal of truth, but without determining the outcome, several possibilities at the same time. So he gives us a sort of potential sequence- an undetermined sequence- that represents a new type of syntagma, a novel form of the 'logic of montage,' but [one] that remains entirely a figure of narrativity" (Qtd. in Cima, 44). The suggestion of possibilities through a montage of scenes is obvious in many of Pinter's later plays, including Landscape.

In the opening of *Landscape*, Beth builds her own landscape through free association of images of past memories:

> I would like to stand by the sea. It is there.
> *Pause*
> I have. Many times. It's something I cared for. I've done it.
> *Pause*
> I'll stand on the beach. On the beach. Well... it was very fresh. But it was hot, in the dunes. But it was so fresh, on the shore. I loved it very much.

Obviously, the sea image triggers memories of the past. As we can see from the third line ("Well… it was very fresh"), the sea image contains transition from the present to the past (Allison, Wellborn, 218). The sea image then develops dynamically, extending to other images like "the dunes", the men moving on the beach, "the shore", Beth's man sleeping in the dune, the women looking at Beth etc; and all these images supply impulses for other related memories. The dune image, for instance, reminds Beth about her conversation with her man about wanting a baby. "Would you like a baby? I said. Children? Babies? Of our own? Would be nice": as Allison and Wellborn notice, Beth's landscape is still one dominated by the shore, as more images linking to the sea are introduced later, yet the rhythm changes (Allison, Wellborn, 218). It becomes more rapid as compared to calm and reflecting tone in the beginning. The baby image is then followed by the image of the women looking. The rhythm changes again as Beth becomes anxious: "Two women looked at me, turned and stared. No. I was walking. They were still. I turned"; "Why do you look?"; "I didn't say that, I stared. Then I was looking at them": the anxiety is obvious when Beth repeatedly asks why they look at her. She also tries to comfort herself by reassuring herself of her beauty and normality. The rapid movement of images, from the sea, to the guy sleeping next to her, to babies, to the strangers looking, and the final reassurance of her own beauty, is linked entirely by free association. There is no logical connection among these images or thoughts. The seeming disconnectedness of the scenes thus open the space for the audience to piece together the shifting coherence of the fragmented details, thus determining their own vision of the narrative.

The fragmented nature of Pinter's narratives also resembles musical compositions. Pinter writes: "I feel a sense of music continually in writing, which is a different matter from being influenced by it" (Qtd. in Allison, Wellborn, 215). *Silence* is always considered one of the most lyrical pieces, which is easier to explain in musical terms. To understand its lyricism, it may be interesting to look at its setting. As Harold Hobsen comments on the premiere of Silence, first produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych Theatre on 2nd July 1969 with *Landscape*, he notes that the play is not as naturalistic as *Landscape*, where the entire play is set in a "kitchen in a great house": "the three characters in *Silence* find themselves is outside time and space: their chairs are on a polished and reflecting floor, and their shadows are for a time thrown back on to the sloping surface of an

engulfing sea. *Silence* is universal; it is a comment, a verdict, rather, on the whole of life" (Hobsen). The setting, which does not have a direct referent in an outside, recognizable source, is an example of the play's lyricism. Walter Pater, in *The Renaissance*, distinguishes music as an ideal condition of art. While for all other kind of arts it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and that the mere matter becomes nothing without the form, the form is "an end in itself" in music: "the spirit, of the handling, that this form, this mode of handling, should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter" (Pater, 86). Like music, the setting in *Silence* does not have a directly conceivable content. It speaks for itself: it speaks of the poignancy and stoicism of existence, and is itself an intensification of moments. This musicality thus brings us back to the earlier argument about the absence of a forward moving narrative: we listen to a piece of music not aiming for the end. Instead, we allow each note to penetrate our soul. In the end of *Silence*, the three characters repeat phrases that appear before, giving the illusion that the entire play is re- run shortly. The play thus gives the impression that the characters are forever locked into their memories, that forever echo and repeat in their minds.

b. Characters' Presence and Motivations

Cima has made an interesting comparison between an actor's presence on stage and that in a film. Cima comments that an actor usually has a strong sense of presence in a theatre because of his or her bodily presence. In a film, however, the audience substitutes the presence of the character for the bodily presence of an actor (Cima, 46). As Cima quotes Metz explaining Jean Leirens' theory, film "does not depend at all on the strong presence of an actor but, rather, on the low degree of existence possessed by those ghostly creatures moving on the screen... [which] are, therefore, unable to resist our constant impulse to invest them with the 'reality' of fiction..., a reality that comes only from within us, from the projections and identifications that are mixed in with our perceptions of the film" (Qtd. in Cima, 46). In other words, the characters are not 'real', but ghostly shadows on a screen: we give them flesh and blood through reflection, and relive them through our perceptions and imagination, the way we relive a protagonist in a fictional world.

Pinter's attempt to enhance the fiction of the characters using cinematic techniques is most clearly exemplified in *Old Times*, where in the beginning it

already suggests to the audiences that the play requires a new understanding of presence and absence. The play starts with "lights up on Deeley and Kate", while "Anna's figure remains still in dim light at the window". Though Pinter leaves the actor who plays Anna onstage, supposedly she has not arrived in the house. Why should Pinter leave Anna upstage from the onset? It seems that the writer desires to challenge our idea of presence, as he comments in an interview: "it's true that in *Old Times* the woman is there, but not there, which pleased me when I managed to do that, when that came through to me" (Qtd. in Gussow, 18). It reminds us of the famous passage in *No Man's Land*, when Hirst looks at his photograph album, and talks about the death being alive: "Allow the love of the good ghost. They possess all that emotion... trapped. Bow to it. It will assuredly never release them, but who knows... what relief... it may give to them... who knows how they may quicken... in their chains, in their glass jars. You think it cruel... to quicken them, when they are fixed, imprisoned? No... no. Deeply, deeply, they wish to respond to your touch, to your look, and when you smile, their joy... is unbounded". The dead, of course, are not literally present; they are alive only because we give them reality, through imagination, reflection, and fictional recreation. Similarly, Anna is there because Deeley and Kate summon her. As Alan Hughes suggests, Deeley and Kate author Anna's presence by ascribing characteristics to her: "Fat or thin?"; "Any idea what she drinks?"; "Why isn't she married? I mean, why isn't she bringing her husband?" etc. (Batty, 62). Anna is, to Hughes, only a fiction that serves to supply the seeming "figment of some emotional need or lack" between the couple. A haunting presence between the couple, Anna plays something of a "phantasmagoriacal role" in their marriage (Batty, 62). To the couple and the audience, Anna's presence on stage is almost like a fantasy.

To make things even more complex, a character's presence is also determined by other characters' motivation and condition. After Anna comes, Kate always plays as an absence. She speaks less than twenty lines in minutes. She also appears to be marginalized- more than twice her remarks receive no feedback. When Anna talks to Deeley about her, she either uses the third person singular pronoun "she", or "wife", as if Kate was not there. It is not surprising if the audience begins to suspect that Kate is also a fantasy. Anna, in contrast, is a dominant presence at this point. The play, however, takes an unexpected turn near the ending, when Kate suddenly asserts herself again and joins in the exchanges which have so far been dominated by Deeley

and Anna. She accepts, all of a sudden, Deeley's account of having a scene in the pub with Anna twenty years ago: "She found your face very sensitive, vulnerable"; "She wanted to comfort it, in the way only a woman can"; "She was prepared to extend herself to you"; "She fell in love with you"; when Deeley asks if she considers it crass looking up people's skirts like he does in the pub, Kate says, "That's not crass". This seeming submissiveness paves the way, however, for Kate's attempt to remove Anna. Kate attempts to punish Anna's betrayal by denying her presence: "But...I remember you dead"; "I remember you lying dead. You didn't know I was watching you. I leaned over you. Your face was dirty. You lay dead, your face scrawled with dirt, all kinds of earnest inscriptions, but unblotted, so that they had run, all over your face, down to your throat". Kate's attempt to erase Anna from her life is merciless and almost violent: Anna's face is horrifyingly ugly, with her grin splitting the dirt at the sides of her mouth; bones breaking through the face. Yet Anna deserves it: "...by dying alone and dirty you had acted with proper decorum". Kate also quickly replaces the dead body with another male body, which she destroys with equal brutality: "He thought I was going to be sexually forthcoming, that I was about to take a long promised initiative. I dug about in the windowbox... and plastered his face with dirt. He was bemused, aghast, resisted, resisted with force". The man is very likely Deeley, and what Kate does to Deeley is very similar to what she imagines herself doing to Anna. As Batty comments, the "death ritual" that Anna and Deeley go through symbolizes that the "battleground of past identities has been washed clean" (Batty, 66). Kate has always been made an object for rival between Deeley and Anna. By rejecting the presence of both, she survives.

A character's existence, thus, greatly depends on imagination and conscious invention; also, it can exist in different time frames. While Pinter's characters are always motivated by dreams, memories, fantasies etc, they can exist outside of time. The past or the future can sometimes dominate and become the present. An explicit example would be in *No Man's Land*, when Hirst appears to be trapped in some space between the present and the past. As Quigley suggests, it is hard to judge whether the play is one of fixity or flux. The title image of the play does suggest some kind of immobility, as Hirst says: "There are places in my heart... where no living soul... has ... or can ever... trespass"; "No man's land... does not move... or change... or grow old... remains... forever... icy... silent"; "I'll stay... where I am".

It is a kind of a land where no one can establish a sense of belonging; it is also a static place where no change occurs. As Jones argues, stasis does appear to be the motif of the play. Spooner's existence effects no change in the house, nor does it affect Hirst and his two men: there is no development in the situation and the characters, and the chief feature of the play is repetition (Gordon, 38). Indeed, Hirst does show a strong sign of disengagement in the play, as he refuses to develop any long term relationship with Spooner even though the latter earnestly requests it. However, there exists also a diversity of images that depicts not fixity but mobility. An obvious one would be the one we mentioned earlier about the presence of the dead: "Under the twigs, under the dead leaves, you'll find tennis balls, blackened. Girls threw them for their dogs, or children, for each other, they rolled into the gully. They are lost there, given up for dead, centuries old". There is a strong sense of continuity as things that appear to have ceased still evoke images of lives. We can almost imagine the dead existing in another dimension, another space unknown to men. Things never come to a halt- as Briggs talks of the elaborate anecdote of him persuading Jack not to drive into Bolsover street, which situates "in the middle of an intricate one- way system": "I told him I knew one or two people who'd been wandering up and down Bolsover street for years. They'd wasted their bloody youth there. The people who live there, their faces are grey, they're in a state of despair, but nobody pays any attention... I wrote to The Times about it. Life At a Dead End, I called it... I remember saying to him: This trip you've got in mind, drop it, it could prove fatal". People want to move on; Spooner moves on. Many times he wants to excuse himself for a board meeting at the Bull's Head. He is always ready to move forward. He is always ready to do something different. The conflict between fixity and mobility is best exemplified at the end of the play, when Hirst attempts to be settled with a topic that he chooses but never succeeds- he still proceeds to talk about the sounds of birds that he heard in the past:

> Hirst: It's night.
> Foster: And will always be night.
> Briggs: Because the subject-
> Foster: Can never be changed.
> *Silence*
> Hirst: But I hear sounds of birds. Don't you hear them? Sounds I never heard before. I hear them as they must have sounded then, when I was young, although I never heard them then, although they sounded about us then.

As Quigley comments, "Hirst's desire for final disengagement conflicts with his desire to reexamine a past in which engagement promised something ill- defined but indispensable" (Qtd. in Gordon, 55). Many of the past moments appear to both "persist and disappear" (Qtd. in Gordon, 55): the birds, the album, relationships etc. There exists a potential for changes, yet changes also seem meaningless. Hirst thus is trapped in this space of conflict, being both haunted and released by the past.

To conclude this section, we can see that when watching Pinter's drama, instead of expecting a forward moving narrative, we should focus on the complexity, the intensity and the ambiguity of the moment. Many actors, being trained in the more traditional performance methodology, are interested in discerning a "logical line of development in each character's behavior from the past to the time of the play" (Cima, 49); yet Sir John Gielgud, playing Spooner in the 1976 run of *No Man's Land*, decided to "accept the suspense and the surprises and not worry too much about what it all sums up to", thus substituting a lot of concentration on "a certain attitude of mind" that guides him through the creation of the character (Qtd. in Cima, 49). Pinter is interested in the nature of reality, which is depicted as extremely dynamic. We would surprise ourselves with endless discoveries if we open ourselves to view the play from different angles of vision. No longer should we look forward only to the end of the play: instead, each moment counts.

Dilatory Space, Intrusion and Politics

In the previous section, we examined the features of the dilatory space in Pinter's works; in this section, we will proceed to explore how this space contributes to the theme of the plays. What does space have to do with the idea of intrusion? Does it have any political implications? In the following, we will attempt to answer these questions by looking closely at *The Caretaker*. The play has a simple plot, concerning the main character Davies, whose origin is a mystery, and who is brought into the house of the two brothers Aston and Mick, and desires to stay; the attitude of the two brothers is both benevolent and aggressive, and they end up expelling Davies from the house.

Manifestly, the main character Davies in *The Caretaker* does not plan to stay for long with Aston. He has been on the road for a couple of years. He mentions having been to "Shepherd's Bush", where his friend who runs a convenience store

tells him about this monastery on "the other side of Luton" which gives away free footwear. Unfortunately, the monks at the monastery only give him a meal and drive him off. He then takes "a short cut to Watford" and picks up a pair of shoes there. When he goes onto "the North Circular, just past Hendon", the sole comes off, and so he has gone all the way to where he is with his old pair on. He plans next to go to "Sidcup" to get his papers. He says, "I can't go on like this. Can't get from one place to another. And I'll have to be moving about, you see, try to get fixed up"; "If only I could get down to Sidcup! I've been waiting for the weather to break. He's got my papers, this man I left them with, it's got it all down there, I could prove everything".

His true intentions and manoeuvrings, to get a free place to live and to milk Aston and Mick for all he can, are revealed in the most trivial exchanges, seemingly harmless actions, and between the pauses and silences in the play. Apparently occupying a subordinate position, Davies carefully takes over the territorial right of Aston's place. As Billington observes, *The Caretaker* opens with Pinter's famous question of who sits and who stands (Billington, 118). Right from the start, Aston invites Davies to "sit down". Though it obviously is a friendly offering, Davies reacts as if he is being placed in an inferior position. He reacts almost defensively, as Billington comments: "Sit down? Huh... I haven't had a good sit down... I haven't had a proper sit down..." (Billington, 118). Twice more Aston offers the seat, yet Davies remains standing. He quickly dominates the situation as Aston "sits on the bed, takes out a tobacco tin and papers, and begins to roll himself a cigarette", while he rambles around the room, raging against the "aliens". He even "turns his back" to Aston when the latter offers him a seat the second time, obviously refusing the dependent position that he is supposed to assume. As the play goes on, he attempts further to turn the situation to his own advantage. Many times he stresses people are not to "take any liberties" with him. When he recalls the Scotchman who asks him to take out a bucket of rubbish, he says, "Look here, I said to him, I got my rights. I told him that. I might have been on the road but nobody's got more rights than I have". Though he seems to be talking about the Scotch, he indirectly addresses Aston as well- we remember the same remark being addressed to Aston and Mick in the end.

Having assured that Aston is a good natured guy who can be manipulated, he begins to test how far he can get:

Davies: Anyway. I'm obliged to you, letting me... letting me a bit of a rest... for a few minutes. (*He looks about.*) This your room?
Aston: Yes.
Davies: You got a good bit of stuff here.
Aston: Yes.
Davies: Must be worth a few bob, this... put it all together.
Pause
There's enough of it.

There are quite a number of pauses in the long exchanges between Davies and Aston, when they touch on some seemingly harmless topics like the stuff around the house, the wind, the draught, the rooms etc. Yet many of the pauses represent Davies' calculation- almost every pause is followed by a question: "You got any rooms then, have you?"; "What about downstairs?"; "This your house then, is it?" The pauses allow him time to plan for the next step as he carefully moves forward, collecting information and exercising his tactics, until he can negotiate a place in the house. Billington notices also that Davies even goes so far as to put Aston in a position of "placatory servitude"- this is most obvious when he demands a pair of good shoes. (Billington, 119). He tells Aston his long story of going all the way to the Luton monastery in search of a good shoes, and how his shoes are "life and death" to him as he needs a good pair to go to get his papers at Sidcup. Aston then offers him a decent pair:

Davies: Not a bad pair of shoes (*He trudges round the room.*) They're strong, all right. Yes. Not a bad shape of shoe. This leather's hardy, en't? Very hardy. Some bloke tried to flog me some suede the other day. I wouldn't wear them. Can't beat leather, for wear. Suede goes off, it creases, it stains for life in five minutes. You can't beat leather. Yes. Good shoe this.
Aston: Good.
Davies waggles his feet.
Davies: Don't fit thought.
Aston: Oh?
Davies: No. I got a very broad foot.
Aston: Mmmm.
Davies: These are too pointed, you see.
Aston: Ah.
Davies: They'd cripple me in a week. I mean these ones I got on, they're no good but at least they're comfortable. Not much cop, but I mean they don't hurt. (*He takes them off and gives them back*). Thanks anyway, mister.
Aston: I'll see what I can look out for you.
Davies: Good luck. I can't go on like this. Can't get from one place to another. And I'll have to be moving about, you see, try to get fixed up.

Davies behaves almost like a demanding master. He critically examines the pair offered by Aston, judging its shape and the leather. He demonstrates his expertise in choosing a good pair, talking of shoes made of suede, how it creases and stains easily. When he proudly waggles his feet and claims that the shoes given could cripple him, it sounds almost like he is putting the blame on Aston. We imagine a master raging against a servant for his incompetence, offering a pair that could potentially hurt. Billington comments also that "there's something wonderfully patronizing about his cry of 'Good luck'" (Billington, 119). Manifestly, the shoes issue sounds ridiculously trivial: Davies' insistence on a perfect pair is almost comic, yet the scene perfectly demonstrates to readers how Davies gains an advantage through the rejection of the shoes, and so also Aston.

Can we then understand Davies as an aggressive intruder in the play? Unlike Goldberg and McCann who break into Stanley's place, however, Davies is invited. As Irving Wardle comments, "The newcomer enters by invitation, and he, not the occupants, is the principal victim" (Qtd. in Woodroffe, 505). Davies being a victim is best demonstrated when Mick dominates him by brute force, yet he also terrifies him with language:

> Mick: Well?
> Davies: Nothing, nothing. Nothing.
> *A drip sounds in the bucket overhead. They look up. Mick looks back to Davies.*
> Mick: What's your name?
> Davies: I don't know you. I don't know who you are.
> *Pause*
> Mick: Eh?
> Davies: Jenkins.
> Mick: Jenkins?
> Davies: Yes.
> Mick: Jen... kins.
> *Pause*
> You sleep here last night?
> Davies: Yes.
> Mick: Sleep well?
> Davies: Yes.
> Mick: I'm awfully glad. It's awfully nice to meet you.
> *Pause*
> What did you say your name was?
> Davies: Jenkins.
> Mick: I beg your pardon?
> Davies: Jenkins!
> *Pause*

Mick: Jen… kins.

A drip sounds in the bucket. Davies looks up.

Pinter does not aim at moving the plot forward; instead, he is interested in accumulating tension. The exchanges between Mick and Davies are repetitive and redundant. Four times Mick asks whether Davies sleeps in his place the night before. If we compare the ways he asks this same question, however, we notice that Mick always speaks with intentions- to test Davies, to seek information from him, to lay traps for him, to terrify and dominate him etc. The first time he asks the question, he is literally asking as he is not sure. From the second time onwards, however, the questions become subtle manoeuvrings. The second question comes along with other queries: "What bed you sleep in", "how do you like my room", and these indirectly declare Mick's territorial right of the place. The third and the fourth times Mick asks with greater aggression. He speaks with "great pace", along with violence: when Davies makes an attempt to rise, Mick sends him back with a "violent bellow". He bombards him and accuses him of being "choosy". This bit reminds us of the scene when Goldberg and McCann interrogate Stanley, with the same verbal violence and frivolous charges. Like Stanley who almost surrenders, Davies "groans" with exhaustion, backing down on every single question. By the final time he asks the same question, Mick already wins the battle for supremacy: Davies "scrambles to the clothes horse and seizes his trousers", and intends to leave for Sidcup, only to be confronted with Mick's threats

Another interesting feature in this scene is its suspense. As discussed, Pinter is very good at creating a dilatory space when the plot perpetuates itself. Besides the pauses and silences, there are also a lot of questions and remarks like "pardon?", "I beg your pardon?", "Eh?", "What?" etc. These questions delay the forward movement of the plot, yet it creates greater tension. The famous "drip sounds" in the bucket may serve the same purpose. Woodroffe understands the bucket politically, and relates it to the image of "overloaded basket" which signifies the concern of over immigration to Britain in the 1950s (Woodroffe, 504). This is a very sound argument and we would look into the issue of immigration later. I prefer, however, to understand the bucket and the drip sounds in a simpler manner. The dripping sound reminds us of the tension in musical compositions. Tension is an important element in music. It can be created through a rise in melodic line or the use of disharmonious and complex elements. It can also be created through a building of dynamics

followed by a rapid pause or silence. Manifestly, pauses or emptiness release tension, yet they actually expose tension by a sharp contrast in density. Think of a clap: it reverberates louder in a vacant space. Also, a sudden silence creates suspense- the anticipation of the next note, whether it is a tender resolution or a tenser build up of melodic line, can create anxiety. Many film directors know well the logic, and thus use slow motions to reflect tension. There is a short scene when Aston hands Davies his bag while Mick grabs the bag away from Davies, followed by Aston taking it back from Mick and gives it back to Davies. The bag goes back and forth among the three for some time. Does it not resemble Chinese Kung Fu movies when the characters are about to fight but not quite? This is to uncover the underlying tension, and to hook the audience's attention.

As seen, the dilatory space is not created merely for an aesthetic reasons, it is permeated with tension and can be politically significant. As discussed in the previous discussion, the space in the play is full of manipulation and tension. It is, however, also a space of ambivalence, and the attitude of Mick and Aston can best demonstrate this idea. Aston is the one who invites Davies in. He appears to be a benevolent figure. He offers Davies a place to stay; he even finds him clothes, a pair of shoes and gives him "a few bob". Mick also boosts his self respect towards Davies. Yet, scenes of aggression alternate with scenes of benevolence. As discussed in the session above, Mick violates Davies with physical and verbal aggression. He lays traps and intimidates him with his greater verbal cunning and dexterity. Aston's attitude is also suspicious. He appears to be the lenient one, yet when the three come together, he is obviously on Mick's side. Even the job offered as a caretaker is itself an ambiguity. As Woodroffe points out, the word "caretaker" denotes both a situation and a place: "It is a place that Davies can never occupy since it is a purely hypothetical vacancy, a product of Mick's fertile imagination and of Aston's benevolence" (Woodroffe, 499). Davies has always acted as a puppet. He never knows what is to be expected of him by the two brothers. As he himself says in the beginning, "I haven't got a good sit down... I haven't had a proper sit down..." Though here he is referring to the so called "aliens" who take his place, neither does he have a proper sit down in Aston's place. He can hardly sleep well, worrying about the stove on top of his bed. We also doubt the true intention of Mick offering Davies a position. It is highly possible that Mick does it as manoeuvrings to expose Davies's shifting loyalty. Having known that Mick is the stronger brother of the two, and that

he would be able to gain more from his allegiance with Mick, he betrays Aston. He says, "Well, I wouldn't say we was all that friends. I mean, he done me no harm, but I wouldn't say he was any particular friend of mine." He also accuses him of being "funny" for not liking work. He has underestimated the sibling network between Mick and Aston. Apparently, Mick sides with Davies; yet there is always an undertone of compassion and brotherly love in what he says. Thus the position of a caretaker can be understood as Mick's weapon to uncover Davies' true intention. It is also, a reflection of Aston's compassion which creates Davies' illusion that he could stay in the place for good.

The equivocal situation of Davies, according to Woodroffe, signifies the situation of the "colored" immigrants arriving in Britain from former colonies (Woodroffe, 503). This is a very interesting reading of *The Caretaker* as a political metaphor, and a very sound one. Growing up in the East End borough of Hackney, racial prejudice and violence were part of the social landscape in Pinter's late teens. According to Billington, there was much opposition against the presence of "30000 Jewish and other aliens" in Hackney in the 1920s, turning the area into "a sort of Middle East" and the immigrants were accused of "depriving locals of jobs and...housing" (Billington, 17). The area was also one with the second highest proportion of "colored immigrants" (Woodroffe, 503). Anti-Semitism was rife. Anxiety about the overflow of immigrants into the country was huge: the image of an "overloaded basket" which drips was used to articulate the public concern about the immigration issue (Woodroffe, 504). The historical background here explains Davies' attitude towards the 'colored'. He describes them as being "toe- rags" that "got the manners of pigs". He is also suspicious of the neighbors who are blacks: "How many Blacks you got around here then?"; "I mean you don't share the toilet with them Blacks do you?"; "all the banisters were dirty, they were black, all the lavatory was black". The situation of the colored immigrants was very similar to that of the Jews who first came into the country in 1880s.

Because of the influx of immigrants towards the end of the 1950s, some form of immigration control was introduced by the British government (Woodroffe, 505). In 1962, the government passed The Commonwealth Immigrants Act which removed the right of Commonwealth citizens to enter the country freely; as a result, the number of immigrants coming into Britain dropped from 140000 in 1961 to 8000 in the last half of 1962 (Woodroffe, 505). The problem was not fully settled until the

1980s, when the British government redefined British citizenship. If we look at the 1948 British Nationality Bill, it announced Britishness coincided with the territory of the nation and the empire. It is the last major piece of legislation, according to Baucom, that "sought to assert the global dimensions of Britishness" (Baucom, 9). It implies that all the subjects of the British Empire share the same identity with the local English. Only later in 1971 did the British government pass another act which identified "certain territories as more authentically British than others"; and in 1981 the government further narrowed the definition of British citizenship as applying only to those whose "parents had been born in the United Kingdom, or had been legally settled here" (Baucom, 13). Davies, whose origin remains a mystery, shares with the new immigrants a suffering of instability and identity crisis. Davies has been invited into the house by Aston; offered a bed to sleep in, clothes and shoes to wear, and even a job. Yet, he ends up being expelled by the two brothers. Alarmingly, he insists on his rights to stay in the place: "You been a good friend to me. You took me in. You took me in, you didn't ask me no questions, you give me a bed, you been a mate to me"; "You mean you're throwing me out? You can't do that." Throughout the entire play, he talks about getting down to Sidcup for the papers that prove his identity, yet he never gets there. The papers have been kept for more than ten years, and throughout all that time he has been living under a false name, unable to define himself.

Conclusion

The word "space" almost always carries the connotation of something physical, especially when we talk about theatrical space; seldom do we think of "space" in any other abstract terms. In this chapter, we have looked into the idea of dilatory space, a space where the forward movement of narratives is suspended and the text perpetuates itself. It reminds us of moments of dramatic presence in performance, when a ballerina holds her elegant arabesque, extended with an amazing height; or when a musical composition pauses after a long build up of melodic line. These are moments when the entire world seems to stop functioning, when the audience is captured and sealed in the absolute presence.

The idea of dilatory space is closely connected to the cinema in Pinter's works. Pinter has successfully transformed the stage into a screen, applying

techniques like montage, lyricism, minimal emphasis on bodily presence, ambiguity of characters' motivations etc. to enrich the text. Instead of the development of the plot, Pinter is more interested in the complexity, the intensity and the ambiguity of the moment.

The space also carries political meanings. Pinter's works are never too far from his politics. The ideas of intrusion, manipulation, cunning manoeuvrings etc work perfectly well with the space which is ambiguous and suspicious. In between the most trivial lines and pauses, Pinter has shown us the most complicated and cruel reality.

5
Conclusion

On the surface, the plays by Pinter and Kane are novel and strange. Pinter appears abstract and incomprehensible, while Kane assaults us with the most violent scenes imaginable. I have pointed out, however, that the apparent novel works by the two writers actually exist within a theatrical tradition. Both writers allude to famous predecessors like Shakespeare and Beckett. Instead of treating them as weird experimental plays, therefore, we may consider the works being the link in a line of development that started all the way from Naturalism and Realism.

Both Naturalism and Realism are mimetic in nature- they share the belief that art should be an objective representation of the outer reality (Furst and Skrine, 8). Naturalism, for instance, treats literature as almost a scientific study. Writers are like doctors whose characters are like human animals to be examined. The affinity to science is due mainly to the background of Naturalism, with the rise of industrial and scientific developments. As compared to Realism, Naturalism is more specific- it places more emphasis on the influence of the "immediate circumstances", the "environment" and "heredity" on human beings (Furst and Skrine, 18). Under the tradition of Naturalism and Realism, genres like the vaudeville and well made plays share certain stylistic norms. For instance, these plays always end with the overcoming of difficulties and a quick restoration of order. Characters are categorized, and they share more or less similar situations.

The naturalistic movement, however, has been condemned as untenable. Critics question what constitutes reality, and whether it is possible to represent objectively the external reality. Modernist writers reject Naturalism as a reinforcement of the existing world which is familiar and predictable, and argue that it fails to liberate men from the existing environment. Works created under these traditions are far too conservative, with stereotypical images, plot and language. Instead of requiring readers to produce knowledge for themselves, these works feed our desire for coherence and certainties.

Critics, therefore, advocate innovation within the canon of Realism and Naturalism. It is not surprising to see how tendentious the canonical selection of playwrights is under the tradition of Naturalism. While all realistic writers advocate

the importance of being truthful to reality, the way of representation changes in response to social changes. We may find writers incorporating a lot of non- realistic elements like legends and popular culture into their works; and others may shift between realistic and non- realistic modes to present their understanding of reality. Modern writers, living in a different era, no longer share the same reality with their predecessors like Chekhov or Ibsen. Pinter and Kane, for instance, have a different understanding of what "reality" is. As I mentioned in the first chapter, both writers believe that there exists an external threat: underneath the apparent mundane surface of our everyday life we find the presence of this threat. Peace and stability are extremely fragile. Pinter and Kane want to show the audience how discomforting and alerting our situation is, with miscommunication and imbalance of power intensifying the worrying circumstances. This may explain the elusive nature of their writing styles- modern writers need a new form that goes with the new content, whether a fragmented or mysterious one. Kane, for instance, is accused of being inconsistent in her writing styles. It is arguable, however, that the inconsistency is due to her dissatisfaction with the existing styles which are too secure and restraining. She therefore experiments with different forms that may best show how vulnerable reality is. In *Blasted*, for instance, she invents a bomb that blasts everything apart and turns a hotel room into a war zone. Thus, the seemingly weird forms of the writers' plays can be explained by the epistemology underlying them.

Having shared the same literary context, Kane and Pinter also share similar concerns for politics, and they use pain and space respectively as media of expression. In Kane's plays, pain illustrates many different layers of meanings. We have attempted to explain the notion of pain in Kane's plays- it may either be redemptive in nature and may show our conscience toward God; or it can be a sign of an estrangement from God. From the old belief of Christianity, pain is redemptive to our sins; suffering is a test of faith in God. The pain we suffer now when we are alive saves us from the eternal and retributive pain after death. Pain in plays like *Cleansed* and *Blasted*, therefore, bears resemblances to pain in religious allegories. Having considered the personal struggles of Kane between her religious faith and its loss, however, I have also explained how pain may mean devastation resulting from a blind faith towards God. God can be an invention or imagination in times of deprivation. The imagined figure gives us consolations in times of suffering, and the pain depicted in Kane's works can convey a rejection of the prevailing religious

beliefs; and the sense of despair resulting from it as life appears to be suddenly devoid of meanings. Most importantly, however, is the relation between pain and nihilism in the modern society. As mentioned in the previous chapters, Kane was very suspicious and disappointed about reality. She was very sensitive to what was happening in the world. Kane criticized widely political issues from the Second World War to the issues of liberalism and democracy in different countries. She pointed out how the government covers inhuman situations and violence of power struggle behind the veil of democracy. What exactly is happening in our society is far beyond our recognition. Pain, therefore, communicates the sense of nihilism living in the modern world- the helplessness in face of terror and unfairness; and the horror of living in an unknown.

On the other hand, the notion of space can have politically implications too. Many of Pinter's early plays are called "comedy of menace", which are usually about intrusion or "threatening behavior" (Gussow, 24). As discussed, Pinter's plays always have a naturalistic appearance. The exchanges sound flat and trivial; the characters are plain and ordinary; many plays are set in ordinary households with the most casual household objects. Underneath the smooth surface, however, the space is permeated with an inner tension. The seeming harmony would be quickly shattered in a typical Pinterish way when the space is either threatened or intruded. There is, thus, a pattern in Pinter's use of space: the outside is usually considered dangerous, while the inside comparatively safe. Stanley in *The Birthday Party*, for example, feels insecure even outside the house; so is the woman in *The Room*, who likes to stay in and treats the basement as an unknown place which is potentially threatening. We all know, however, that the inside does not guarantee peace and harmony. Pinter is particularly good at creating an inner drama that alerts and discomforts the audience. When Meg attempts physical contact with Stanley, for instance, the funny game of flirting and teasing between the two immediately turns the atmosphere into an anxious one. This echoes with Kane's idea that peace is always fragile. All these, however, are closely connected to Pinter's political concerns. The two invaders in *The Birthday Party*, for example, may be understood as an unknown power in society who brainwash people with their ideologies. Pinter himself commented that the question of how power and violence are used to terrorize and subjugate is prominent in his works (Gussow, 73). He suggested that *The Birthday Party* is actually about religion, and how religion uses people. Having long been scorned and derided for

independent thinking, the horror of a sudden intrusion from the outside can be far beyond our comprehension.

The ideas of pain and space, however, communicate more than mere political themes- they also have indirect political effects. We have discussed in the introduction that the importance of body and space as key theatrical ideas is often overlooked. When we approach a script, we tend to read it as a poem or a story; seldom do we think of it as something to be performed on stage. The idea of awakening one's body and being sensitive to the surroundings; the idea of opening one's mind and body to the present moment; the idea of being fearless lying at the edge and experiencing the unknown etc., are all essences of performances. Performing art is about exposing one's body and senses to the spaces available; it is about opening oneself to experiencing, instead of sitting and analyzing. Is not literature about experiencing as well? Not all writers are political writers, yet this does not stop literature from achieving political effects: literature can perform many things than to merely represent. It can discomfort, warn, question, flirt, flatter etc, yet it does not achieve its full effects without our recovering of senses and alertness of being open. The open wound means an embrace of the horror- good art makes us nervous, yet the worst always illuminates best.

The notion of pain in Kane and space in Pinter achieve exactly the above effects. Though theatrical cruelty is always something controversial, the same controversies, however, recur over many centuries. Shakespeare is known to be extremely violent too. While many walk out of productions on Kane's plays, being unhappy with all the urine, blood, cutting of tongue, forced sex etc., we may want to rethink what responses the playwright would like to elicit from the audiences. Is violence the focus at all? Is the chopping of hands really about the actual chop? To Kane, the theatre is a place where the audience experiences the tragic imaginatively, which in turn stimulates for revelation. Dramatists Artaud and Barker also raise similar ideas about giving ourselves in to the dark powers in the theatre. The theatre is about embracing the internal reality of our minds, regardless of how violent and dangerous our thoughts are. Theatre is never a secure place where you can sit back and relax. The audience is encouraged to fully participate and lose oneself to doubts and uncertainties. On the other hand, when we are to confront Pinter's dilatory space, with all the pauses, silences and suspension, how should we react? As modern audience, we are sometimes too impatient, and perhaps too interest oriented. We

watch a play, thinking of getting to the end. We desire to know what happens in the end. We enjoy discovering secrets and truths. Without an ending, a story appears incomplete. We are also taught to analyze a drama from the beginning, to the rising action, to the climax and finally the resolution. We demand a neat ending which makes satisfying consonance with the beginning and the middle. Pinter upsets and challenges our expectations on what constitutes a plot. The dilatory space is a space of suspension. It delays the forward movement of the plot. It demands readers to focus on the presence and carefully scrutinize it. As Kermode comments, time is supposed to be disorganized. A traditional plot is only a humanized concept of time. It is a construction that satisfies our desire for totality. We should perhaps put that aside and learn to focus on the present moment.

Being fully attentive to the present can perhaps bring us to the true beauty of the pieces. Pinter's space may appear empty, a careful examination brings us to its richness. Being a screenwriter alongside a playwright, Pinter is heavily influenced by the cinema. His cinematic intelligence enriches his plays in many levels, including the use of montages and lyricism. Some of his later plays play with the free association of images of past memories, which develop dynamically without a clear transition or logic in time or concepts. The shifting coherence in the fragmented details also gives his pieces a musical sensibility. The carefully composed silences and pauses, together with the echoes and repetitions, give his plays a lyrical taste. Putting the aesthetics aside, these features also add substance to the development of a dilatory space. When the audience fails to deduce a directly conceivable content or a clear plot line from these elements, the plays begin to speak for themselves. We begin to penetrate the souls of the pieces, instead of subjugating them to lifeless analyzing. Similarly, pain can be close to beauty. As I mentioned in the introduction, Kane's works are extremely intense, especially in the emotional sense. It is not difficult to sense the undiluted anger and the hopeless depression in her plays. Kane's personal experience and suffering may explain the intensity, so is the notion of pain. Through imagination and poetry, Kane beautifies pain and suffering. *4.48 Psychosis*, for example, is a beautiful piece. Death is described as almost romantic and heroic, and the embracing of death serene and respectful. The slow approaching of death is nothing horrible or mysterious; instead, it is like a return to birth. Death is described as a unification with nature, when the sea, the clouds and the waves together mourn for a cessation of existence. Though the piece ends with a death, we

see no struggles and tears, but a sense of relief and comfort. In Pinter's words, "The wound is open. The wound is peopled" (Pinter, 7). Kane has shown us the most disastrous through both words and action, yet she heals the wound again by revealing to us the most humane and serene.

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